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PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY CHRONICLE • LXVII • NO. 2 • WINTER 2006

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VOLUME LXVII 2005–2006



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# Indian Politics in Cold War America

## *PARALLEL AND CONTRADICTION*

DANIEL M. COBB

In 1957, just months after his second failed campaign for President of the United States, Adlai Stevenson (Princeton Class of 1922) reported a series of challenging questions he had received regarding the conduct of American foreign policy. “How do you reconcile your anti-colonialism with your treatment of your own Indians and your violent seizure of immense territories from neighboring Mexico?” critics asked. “Who was the imperialist then? How do you justify having one standard for yourselves and another for your acknowledged friends?”<sup>1</sup> Such queries illuminate one of the most intriguing realities of Cold War America—the intersection between and interconnectedness of domestic and international politics.<sup>2</sup> Correspondence, photographs, and published documents residing in Princeton University Library’s Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA) Archives offer a contemporary perspective on what often amounted to a turbulent confluence. As leaders of this New York-based organization consisting primarily of non-Indian academics, patricians, and retired government bureaucrats engaged in the politics of federal Indian policy during

I wish to thank the Friends of Princeton University Library for awarding a Short-Term Research Grant that made the writing of this essay possible and especially editor Gretchen Oberfranc for her encouragement and many helpful suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Adlai Stevenson, “The Support of Nationalism Helps Combat Communist Imperialism,” *Western World* 1 (May 1957), 33, Adlai E. Stevenson Papers, box 207, folder 8, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

<sup>2</sup> Two of the most enlightening explorations of these intersections are Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001). A thoughtful collection of essays on recent trends in the field is Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

the 1950s and early 1960s, they drew upon the language of modernization, development, and decolonization. Their effort proved to be a conceptual balancing act fraught with as much peril as potential—for in drawing these parallels they, like Adlai Stevenson, ultimately had to reckon with the specter of contradiction.

#### PARALLEL

The federal policy of termination cast a ponderous shadow over the immediate postwar years and provided the backdrop for the AAIA's activism. Articulated in House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 108 in 1953, termination meant the abrogation of tribes' sovereign relationships with the federal government. Public Law 280, passed the same year, gave select states the authority to assume criminal and civil jurisdiction over reservations without tribal consent. Advocates of termination envisioned the eventual liquidation of tribally owned land and the end of special legal relationships between Native peoples and the United States. The Indian Claims Commission, established in 1946, laid the groundwork by creating a mechanism to settle legal claims against the United States. Having provided final restitution for promises made and broken, pro-terminationists argued, Congress could justifiably abolish tribes' unique legal status. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the agency charged with administering federal programs for tribes, encouraged individuals and families to leave their reservation homes and begin anew in urban centers such as Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, and St. Louis through its Voluntary Relocation Program.<sup>3</sup> Support for this "solution" to the "Indian problem" gained momentum after World War II and reached its apex in the mid-1950s.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On the Indian Claims Commission, see Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933–1953* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), chap. 2. The most recent monographic treatment of relocation is Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000). But also see Kenneth R. Philp, "Stride Toward Freedom: The Relocation of Indians to Cities, 1952–1960," *Western Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (April 1985), 175–90, and Peter Iverson, "Building Toward Self-Determination: Plains and Southwestern Indians in the 1940s and 1950s," *Western Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (April 1985), 163–73.

<sup>4</sup> On termination, see Philp, *Termination Revisited*, chaps. 5–6 and 9–10; Larry W. Burt, *Tribalism in Crisis: Federal Indian Policy, 1953–1961* (Albuquerque: University



Riding on the crest of a war fought in the name of democracy and freedom, proponents of termination evoked images of emancipation, integration, equality, and full citizenship to bolster public support. The idea purportedly manifested the egalitarian ideals that informed postwar race relations generally.<sup>5</sup> “In a sense, the Indian Service is an anachronism,” one interested commentator wrote. “It goes back to the days when the doctrine of white supremacy was heard in the land, and when members of minority groups were regarded as inferiors, to be exploited or protected as the case might be.”<sup>6</sup> Indians, it followed, would be guaranteed their full legal equality as American citizens but stripped of their so-called special privileges. The federal government would harness the power of economic growth by enticing outside industries to locate plants in depressed areas and by providing job training and remedial education. No longer isolated and culturally deprived, the thinking went, Indians would be immersed in the healing currents of what contemporaries called the “mainstream of American life.”<sup>7</sup>

Cold War ideology infused the rationale for termination. On one level, the assault on tribalism made sense because reservations ostensibly served as hothouses for Communism. They perpetuated attributes of primitivism such as tribal lifeways, communal land ownership, and unconventional spiritual practices. “Tradition Is the Enemy of Progress” read one sign atop a Presbyterian mission in the Navajo Nation. And with missionary zeal, politicians and others labored to exorcize Indians of their anti-modern ways. In the minds of those

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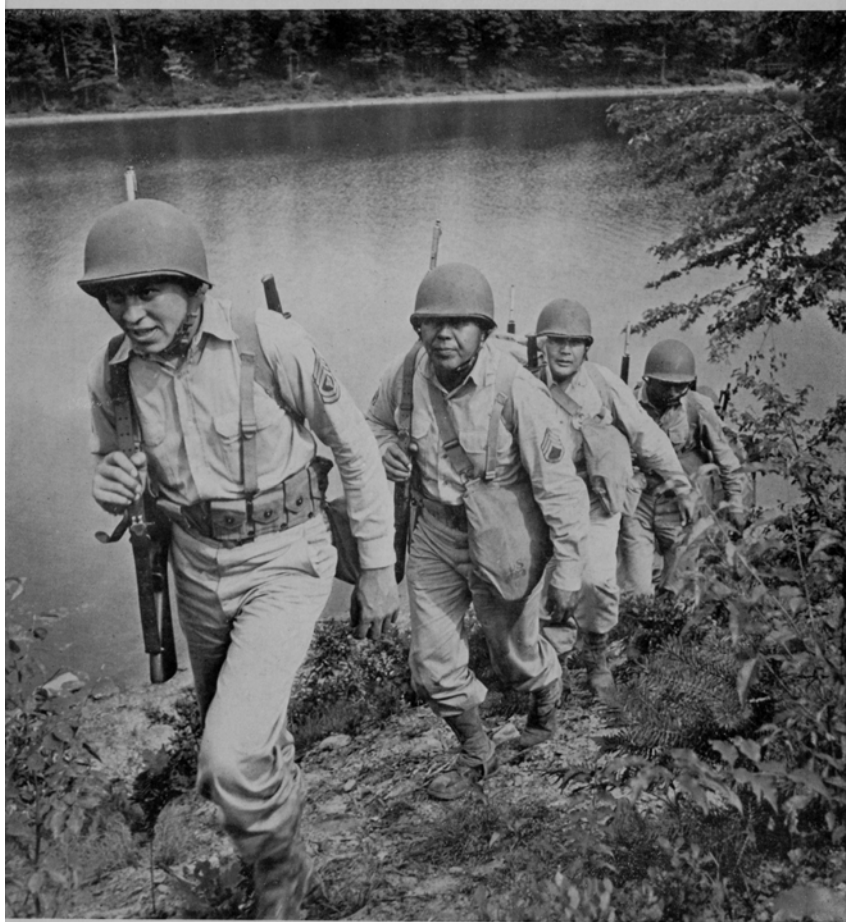
of New Mexico Press, 1982); Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); and Thomas W. Cowger, *The National Congress of American Indians: The Founding Years* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 49–53 and 99–108.

<sup>5</sup>Alice O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10, 76, 97.

<sup>6</sup>Alice Marriott, “Why Doesn’t the Government . . .” ca. 1950–1953, p. 3, Alice Lee Marriott Collection, box 81, folder 45, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma. Also see James E. Officer’s discussion of the anti-New Deal trend, “Termination as Federal Policy: An Overview,” in *Indian Self-Rule: Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan*, ed. Kenneth R. Philp (1988; repr., Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995), 116.

<sup>7</sup>These proposals were very much an extension of more general federal policies toward the poor. See O’Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 19–21, 77, 94–98.

**AMERICAN INDIANS PROTECT YOU !**



**DO YOU PROTECT THEM?**

The AAIA's attempt to draw parallels between international and domestic politics predated its embrace of Point IV. During World War II, the organization used this image of Indian soldiers to rally public support for the protection of treaty rights at home. Pamphlet, ca. 1944-1945, Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, box 123, folder 3, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of the AAIA.

who crafted the policy, termination thus proffered a free-market solution to poverty, cultural backwardness, and second-class citizenship. It therefore served an additional ideological function: Solving the Indian problem reaffirmed the superiority of the dominant culture and the capitalist economic system that sustained it. Put simply, American Indians as distinct peoples had no place in modern America. Rather, they should take their place among minorities that shared the same rights and responsibilities as other American citizens.<sup>8</sup>

The Association on American Indian Affairs spearheaded the movement against termination. The product of a merger between smaller organizations founded during the 1930s, it secured a prominent place in the politics of federal Indian policy. During the 1950s, its membership grew to include some 25,000 individuals. Oliver La Farge, the acerbic, hard-drinking, chain-smoking author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Laughing Boy* (1929), served as the association's president. His prestige, as well as his academic training as an anthropologist, gave him entrée into the Department of the Interior and, within it, the BIA.<sup>9</sup> Felix Cohen, former Solicitor of the Interior Department and one of the main architects of the Indian variant of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, served as general counsel until his untimely death in 1953. Two skilled lawyers, Richard Schifter and Arthur Lazarus, succeeded him.<sup>10</sup> The former exhibited a keen ability to gain access to powerful people, particularly those within the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson during the 1960s.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Burt, *Tribalism*, 121; O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 100. A reference to the sign "Tradition Is the Enemy of Progress" appears in Helen Peterson to W. W. Keeler, November 10, 1960, Records of the National Congress of American Indians, box 66, folder: "Keeler, W. W. (Consultant, BIA)," National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, Maryland (hereafter NCAI Records).

<sup>9</sup> Robert A. Hecht, *Oliver La Farge and the American Indian: A Biography*, Native American Resources Series, no. 2 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1991), 1, 44, 124.

<sup>10</sup> Hecht, *Oliver La Farge*, 215. Cohen succumbed to cancer at the age of forty-six on October 19, 1953. Press Release, October 21, 1953, Archives of the Association on American Indian Affairs, box 82, folder 13, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library (hereafter AAIA Archives).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Schifter actually authored John F. Kennedy's Indian policy statement during the 1960 presidential campaign. It was peppered generously with references to an Indian Point IV program (discussed below). See Helen Peterson to Officers, Members, Associates, November 2, 1960, box 141, folder 9, AAIA Archives.



Described as “intolerant toward incompetence and ruthless against fear and corruption,” AAIA President Oliver La Farge devoted thirty-five years of his life to the Indian rights struggle. A memorial published in *Indian Affairs* (August 1963) recalled: “Controversy became him and was part of him, and he was always on the side of people who needed help. He was not a kind man, he was a tough and salty one, not always easy to get along with and very hard to please.” Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, box 415, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of the AAIA.

Through the latter part of the 1950s, the association moved away from merely raising public awareness about Indian issues. Instead, it began to engage the political process in Washington and became increasingly involved in Indian communities at the local level. This shift can be attributed to the aggressive leadership of AAIA Executive Director LaVerne Madigan. An intelligent, tough, irascible, and persistent woman, she graduated Phi Beta Kappa from New York University in 1934. In 1951, after working with the War Relocation Authority and spending several more years as a homemaker, she joined the AAIA as an assistant to then Executive Director Alexander Lesser. Within four years, she had replaced him. As Oliver La Farge's health failed during the latter half of the 1950s, Madigan took hold of the organization and powerfully moved it into the realm of intensive community development.<sup>12</sup>

The AAIA's search for an intellectual framework for its efforts took place amidst a larger trend in postwar America in which ideas regarding evolutionary social, political, and economic change at home and abroad intertwined. Increasingly through the 1950s, academics and policy makers applied social scientific theories regarding underdevelopment and cultural deprivation in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East to poverty-stricken areas in the United States. According to modernization ideology, just as some foreign countries suffered because of their relative isolation, so too did poor communities in Appalachia, urban ghettos, and Indian reservations. In the context of international affairs, Third World nations needed to adopt "liberal social values, capitalist economic organizations, and democratic political structures" in order to contribute to the global economy and join a world order made in the image of the United States. The modernization of economically depressed communities within the United States would operate analogously by promoting cultural change and regional economic growth to pull once marginalized people into the mainstream.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hecht, *Oliver La Farge*, 259; Fergus M. Bordewich, *My Mother's Ghost* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 222–36; "LaVerne Madigan," *Indian Affairs* 48 (October 1962), 1; Confidential Report to the Board of Directors by Oliver La Farge, April 15, 1960, box 394, folder 9, AAIA Archives.

<sup>13</sup> John Lewis Gaddis makes the significant point that the countries assigned by policy makers to the "Third World" had more differences than commonalities. Included were nations that had not been colonies at the end of World War II and oth-

Perhaps the most compelling ideational convergence grew out of Point IV, an innovative component of President Harry S. Truman's foreign policy. In January 1949, Truman enunciated four objectives for U.S. involvement overseas. In his fourth and final point, he called for "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." Congress gave form to this vision with the Act for International Development (AID) in June 1950.<sup>14</sup> Point IV ultimately received modest funding and produced unremarkable results, but that reality did not diminish its philosophical import. If scientific training and technical assistance from the United States could be used to modernize the world's poorest nations, critics observed, surely they could also be employed to improve America's own downtrodden communities.

As early as 1952, the Association on American Indian Affairs began to contemplate the relationship between Point IV and federal Indian policy. Oliver La Farge, having read a report on the subject authored by personnel within the BIA, considered the intersections "most illuminating."<sup>15</sup> AAIA General Counsel Felix Cohen elaborated on the theme in a 1953 essay he titled "First Americans First." "How can we expect to aid backward people abroad and avoid ill feeling," he asked, "when our original Point Four program—for the American Indian—is still foundering after 162 years of operation?" Cohen well understood the degree to

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ers that had never been colonized. What bound them together, he argues, was their condition of being "predominantly pre-industrial." Given its extensive use during the period under study, I have opted to use the term "Third World," but with this caveat in mind. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 153. The quotation is from Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>14</sup>Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 7, 25; Clark Clifford, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir*, with Richard Holbrooke (New York: Random House, 1991), 252; James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 168. For the quotation, see William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932–1972* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973), 474.

<sup>15</sup>"Inter-Relationship of Point Four and Indian Administration," attached to Oliver La Farge to Alexander Lesser, August 29, 1952, box 151, folder 6, AAIA Archives. This report notes significant involvement of former Indian Service personnel in the Agency for International Development.



which recent federal policy had abandoned support for tribal self-government. During the 1930s, Cohen had worked with Indian Commissioner John Collier to write the Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act, 1934), a piece of legislation that bolstered the power of tribal governments. He went on to author the foundational *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (1941), a text that refuted the notion of wardship by painstakingly detailing the inherent rights possessed by tribes. As reflected in still another essay, "Colonialism: U.S. Style," Cohen questioned the capacity of the BIA to change or to act as anything other than a "benevolent dictatorship."<sup>16</sup>

It would take several years for these initial intellectual forays to amount to anything of substance. The impetus came on October 26, 1955, when AAIA Executive Director LaVerne Madigan wrote urgently to Oliver La Farge about a *New York Times* article she had read concerning President Dwight Eisenhower's intention to ask Congress to create a Point IV program for economically distressed areas in the United States. "The story got me so excited that I had to borrow a pencil from the man sitting next to me on the train so that I could jot down thoughts. (Maybe I am just excitable)," she reported to La Farge. "It seemed to me that the Point IV angle gives us a much more positive, challenging issue on which to hang our resounding appeal for Indian rights. . . . After all, Point IV is modern America at its best and most sympathetic." Following Madigan's urging, La Farge penned a strongly worded letter to Eisenhower, calling for the inclusion of Indians in the domestic Point IV initiative.<sup>17</sup>

Through the winter of 1955 and early spring of 1956, the AAIA organized a committee to develop a congressional resolution to replace HCR 108. In addition to this effort, the organization officially adopted a statement in support of an American Indian Point IV program at its annual meeting in New York City on April 19, 1956.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Felix S. Cohen, "First Americans First," *The New Leader*, January 26, 1953, 15, 16; Felix Cohen, "Colonialism: U.S. Style," *The Progressive* 15, no. 2 (February 1951), 16–18. For a collection of his essays, see Lucy Kramer Cohen, ed., *The Legal Conscience: Selected Papers of Felix S. Cohen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

<sup>17</sup>LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, October 26, 1955; Madigan to La Farge, October 27, 1955; La Farge to Madigan, October 28, 1955; and La Farge to Dwight D. Eisenhower, November 10, 1955, box 170, folder 1, AAIA Archives.

<sup>18</sup>LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, February 10, 1956; Charles Russell to La Farge, February 5, 1956, attached to La Farge to Betty [Rosenthal], Carl [Russell],

Madigan believed that the connection between Indians and underdeveloped nations would resonate with people who otherwise had no comprehension of American Indian issues. An American Indian Point IV program, she asserted, “was a phrase which commanded the attention and understanding of the public.” It suggested “a new, dynamic approach to Indians, already tested overseas. It is that very newness our members and the press like.” As Madigan had anticipated, the AAIA received accolades from the media. “The Point 4 idea is probably the most promising single idea ever developed in the country’s foreign policy to help untrained people join the main stream of modern society,” heralded one of many newspaper editorials that appeared in the months that followed. “It should be applied unceasingly both overseas and at home.”<sup>19</sup>

The attention garnered from the public did not translate into widespread congressional support until Montana Democrat James E. Murray introduced the AAIA’s resolution as Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 3 in January 1957. Entitled “An American Indian Point IV Program,” SCR 3 proposed the repeal of House Concurrent Resolution 108.<sup>20</sup> It also denounced assimilation, called for the reduction of the BIA’s role to one of providing only technical and financial assistance, recommended tribal control over the timing and nature of outside involvement in Indian affairs, and pledged support for the maximization of natural and human resources. “Indian communities cannot be considered to have reached the American level

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and LaVerne, February 14, 1956, box 151, folder 6; Oliver La Farge, “Indian Affairs and the 84th Congress to Date,” February 3, 1956, box 43, folder 3, AAIA Archives. For national coverage of the annual meeting and the original draft of the AAIA resolution, see box 151, folder 6, AAIA Archives. See also D’Arcy McNickle, *Indian Man: A Life of Oliver La Farge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 179–81.

<sup>19</sup> LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, March 9, 1956, box 151, folder 6, AAIA Archives. The second quotation is from “A Point 4 Program for American Indians?” *Tribune* (Lewiston, Idaho), April 26, 1956, box 151, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>20</sup> LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, December 14, 1956, box 43, folder 3, AAIA Archives. Whether or not a concurrent resolution retained staying power beyond the congressional session in which it was proposed was debated. The point was moot, however, because members of Congress actively pursued termination throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Tribes would not yield until it had been symbolically laid to rest. See “A New Policy for American Indians,” box 315, folder 2, AAIA Archives. Senator Murray initially introduced the “American Indian Point IV Resolution” in July 1956. See S.Con.Res.85, box 7, folder 5, William Zimmerman, Jr., Papers, Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, New Mexico.





## *An American Indian Point IV Program*

*—is the subject of a resolution passed by the membership of the Association on American Indian Affairs at its annual meeting on April 19, 1956. The Association will judge the actions of the Interior Department and its Bureau of Indian Affairs and of the Congress by the measure provided by the terms of this resolution; and the effectiveness of the Association's own program shall be judged by that same measure. The text of the resolution follows:*

**W**

HEREAS it is the understanding of this Association that Federal responsibility in the American Indian problem cannot be fulfilled by the dispersal of Indian communities, but by the continuous development of their human and economic potential; and

WHEREAS it is recognized that Indian communities cannot be considered to have reached the American level of well-being until the principles of consent of the governed, self-determination, and local self-government are operative, nor until Indian opportunities in economy, education and health are measurably equal to those of their fellow-citizens, and

WHEREAS the American "Point IV Program," as it has been applied successfully in underdeveloped areas of the world, reveals tested techniques whereby American Indian communities may be so developed; now, therefore, be it

**R**

ESOLVED by the Association on American Indian Affairs in Annual Meeting this 19th day of April, 1956, that the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be, by definition, an agency to assist American Indian communities to reach the level of well-being enjoyed by other communities in the United States; and the governing program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be an American Indian Point IV Program.

It is further declared that this program should be offered to the American Indian communities without exacting termination of Federal protection of Indian property or of any other Indian rights as its price; that Indian culture and identity should not be restricted or destroyed; that technical guidance and financial assistance should be made available; that the request for assistance should come from the Indians after each Indian group has studied itself in terms of its own needs; that an impartial effort should be made to deal with the development of natural resources to maximum capacity, to develop the full capabilities of industrial and agricultural production, of improvements in housing, nutrition, clothing, sanitation, and health, and of the resettlement on their own initiative of individuals and families in other areas; that technical assistance should be given to long-term general, vocational, technical, and professional education to enable American Indians to share fully in our total American society and to contribute to it; and that older, revered values should be respected and used as new forms of living are introduced.

It is further resolved that the Secretary of the Interior should review all programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in order to develop its activities to further an American Indian Point IV Program; and that he should report to Congress at the earliest possible date his recommendations for such legislation as may be necessary to accomplish the purposes of this resolution.

Finally, it is declared that Federal protection and services should be ended for any tribe, band or group only when that unit shall have adopted a plan for its organization and operation under State law, and the plan shall have been approved by the appropriate State and by the Secretary of the Interior prior to its submission to the Congress.

*For further information, write to:*

Mr. Oliver La Farge, President  
Association on American Indian Affairs, Inc.  
48 East 86th Street  
New York 28, N. Y.

The American Indian Point IV Program represents one of many intersections between foreign and domestic politics during the Cold War. The AAIA's initial resolution served as the foundation for Senate Concurrent Resolution 3. Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, box 151, folder 6, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of the AAIA.

of well-being until the principles of consent of the governed, self-determination, and local self-government are operative,” it read, “nor until Indian opportunities in economy, education, and health are measurably equal to those of their fellow citizens.”<sup>21</sup> The resolution stopped short of completely negating termination, though it rejected the notion that the withdrawal of the special relationship between tribes and the federal government must be the inevitable end of modernization in Indian Country.

Shortly after the introduction of SCR 3, the AAIA printed the full text in its newsletter, *Indian Affairs*, along with a front-page editorial that elaborated on the theme. The essay implored the Eisenhower administration and Congress “to face the American Indian problem and its meaning.” “Looked at through a haze of national wish-fulfillment, it is only the little question of 450,000 stiff-necked people who would have no trouble if they would simply stop being Indians,” the editorial explained. “Seen this way, the Indian question is hardly an item for [a] Governmental agenda that will include the authorization to send armed forces to block Soviet imperialism.” But that attitude avoided the real issue. “Looked at squarely,” the AAIA’s petition countered, “the Indian problem is a problem of conquest and colonialism, deeply involving us and our ideal of ourselves as a nation.”<sup>22</sup>

To accompany the introduction of SCR 3, LaVerne Madigan orchestrated an undertaking that brought seventy tribal delegates from forty Native communities, as well as members of other leading Indian advocacy organizations, to Washington, D.C., in May 1957.<sup>23</sup> There they convened a legal workshop and provided testimony in favor of the American Indian Point IV Program and supporting legislation before the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. Among the participants was the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), a pan-tribal alliance that had gained considerable strength since its founding in 1944.<sup>24</sup> Three years prior to the introduction of SCR

<sup>21</sup> “A Legislative Program for American Indians, An American Indian Point IV Program, Senate Concurrent Resolution 3,” *Indian Affairs* 19 (January 1957), 4.

<sup>22</sup> “Editorial,” *Indian Affairs* 19 (January 1957), 1.

<sup>23</sup> “S. Con. Res. 3—The American Indian Point IV Program,” *Indian Affairs* 22 (September 1957), 3. LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, April 30, 1957, box 315, folder 2, AAIA Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Emergency Conference of American Indians on Legislation, Washington, D.C., February 25–28, 1954, Archives of the American Civil Liberties Union, box 1131, folder 5, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections,



LaVerne Madigan, seen here speaking at the legal workshop held in conjunction with hearings on Senate Concurrent Resolution 3 in May 1957, powerfully influenced the AAIA during her tenure as executive director. Her son, Fergus Bordewich, later wrote: "She ... had a deep, instinctive empathy with the bitterness of conquered and frustrated people, understanding that the Indian problem was not just one of administration and better provision of federal services, but something that went to the heart of American democracy." Seated, left to right, are tribal leaders Joseph Garry (Couer d'Alene) and Clarence Wesley (San Carlos Apache). Association on American Indian Affairs Archives, box 415, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Gift of the AAIA.

3, NCAI Executive Director Helen Peterson (Northern Cheyenne/Lakota) had organized a similar event that dealt a decisive blow to coercive termination. In their search for an alternative policy, the NCAI had also looked abroad. And like the AAIA, the organization found it in the approach taken by the United States toward nations emerging from the devastation of war and colonial rule.<sup>25</sup>

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Princeton University Library (hereafter ACLU Archives). See also Cowger, *National Congress of American Indians*, 25–26, 30–31, 38, 44, 58–69, 76–125. On the significance of the NCAI as a pan-tribal organization that fostered a "supratribal consciousness," see Stephen Cornell, *The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 119 and 191–92.

<sup>25</sup> Following the NCAI's Emergency Conference of American Indians on Legislation in February 1954, Salish intellectual and NCAI charter member D'Arcy

By situating the fight against termination in an international context, the Association on American Indian Affairs and the National Congress of American Indians sought to give the struggle greater import—to transform the just treatment of Native peoples into a policy imperative to winning the Cold War. By the late 1950s, areas from Egypt and Indonesia to the Middle East and Latin America had become ideological battlegrounds. Competing emissaries from the United States and the Soviet Union promised economic development, trade, and technical assistance. For both superpowers, such assistance demonstrated more than simple goodwill. To be anything less than beneficent would be a stain on the national honor and risk humiliation. In this situation, as historian John Lewis Gaddis has argued, “Reputation emerged as a vital interest, with credibility the standard against which to measure it.” Superimposed over the base issues of economic power, military might, and ideological superiority, this moral dimension gave the United States and the Soviet Union yet another means of competing with each other and, consequently, proffered a tool Third World countries could use to their advantage.<sup>26</sup>

Proponents of SCR 3 emphasized the issue of morality and contended that the treatment of Indians should be of vital interest. The world’s indigenous peoples surely wondered whether the United States intended to uphold the ideals upon which the nation had been founded. And for a litmus test, they could look upon the conditions and status of the indigenous nations within its own borders. It was obvious, according to La Farge, that termination would be found

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McNickle authored a report that developed this theme. See McNickle, “Proposed Elements to be Included in a Point Four Program for American Indians,” box 1131, folder 5, ACLU Archives. See also Dorothy R. Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D’Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 174; Guy B. Senese, *Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 23–24; Cowger, *National Congress of American Indians*, 109, 117, 122; Office Manager for Helen Peterson to W. W. Keeler, January 5, 1966, box 66, folder: “Keeler, W. W. (Consultant, BIA),” NCAI Records; Barbara Moffett, “American Indians: Their Role in Society,” p. 33, in box 3, folder: “American Indians: Their Role in Society,” University of Chicago, American Indian Chicago Conference Records, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, Maryland (hereafter AICC Records).

<sup>26</sup> Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 27–28; for the quotation, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 154.

wanting, for it ran “contrary to basic American principles encouraging the greatest amount of self-determination of dependent peoples the world over.”<sup>27</sup> Making the point even more explicit, Madigan labeled tribal communities “America’s colonies.” Like many Third World nations, Indians had “their self-government restricted,” took directives from a distant bureaucracy over which they had little control, and languished under the “paternalistic limitations upon their home rule...”<sup>28</sup>

Madigan continued this line of argument in a private letter to La Farge. “The problem is that of what a democracy is to do with elements of conquered peoples who do not admit to conquest,” she wrote. “[I]ntolerable as this may be to us in our national self-image, our democracy is impure to the extent that the people we conquered do not accept it as their democracy—and to that extent we are corrupted by a hidden colonialism (hidden from ourselves, I mean).” “As long as the corruption, the colonialism, is there, or until the implacable colonials die out,” she concluded, perhaps making reference to the threat of Communist exploitation, “we shall have spiritually desperate people among us who are subvertible by the spiritually base.”<sup>29</sup> Termination, the proposed solution to this deplorable situation, only exacerbated reservation poverty, opened wide the doors of exploitation, led to the plunder of Native resources, and undermined tribal self-governance.

Indian and non-Indian activists thus carried the parallels further, contending that Indian affairs had grave implications for American efforts to forestall the spread of Communism overseas. Like Felix Cohen before them, Madigan and La Farge asked discomfiting questions: How could the world’s developing nations take seriously American promises to improve their lives in light of the condition of Indians? What country would allow its citizens to suffer the fate of Native Americans? Employing an argument found also in the struggle for black equality, they pointed to a fundamental contradiction in the democratic principles espoused by the United States. A Point IV pro-

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Hecht, *Oliver La Farge*, 196. Hecht rightly notes that La Farge “did not find it incongruous that as of 1949 no Indian had as yet sat on the AAIA board of directors” (197).

<sup>28</sup> LaVerne Madigan, “Indian Survival on the Great Plains,” *Indian Affairs* 22 (September 1957), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Bordewich, *My Mother’s Ghost*, 226–27.

gram at home that improved Indians' material well-being and demonstrated respect for self-governance, by contrast, would lend credibility to the United States in its ideological contest with the Soviet Union. To do anything less would be to lose face in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Indian affairs would become grist for the Soviet propaganda mill.<sup>30</sup>

For AAIA President Oliver La Farge, the matter came down to justice, or what he called "a genuinely American, democratic Indian policy." He argued that the basic principle of this enlightened position would be the recognition that "Indians have as great a right to survive in communities, if they so wish, as they have to survive as individuals." "An individual can physically survive, after all, in a Siberian slave camp, in a Hungarian jail, as an exile, or at the bottom of an American big-city slum," La Farge elaborated. "It is not such mere continued breathing that America promises her children, but something infinitely more complex, a texture of satisfactions, pride, tradition, achievement, fellowships, that add up to a life worth living, a way of life worth fighting for. It is this that we must make possible for Indians as for all Americans."<sup>31</sup> Here again La Farge synthesized domestic and international politics. From this convergence, American Indian affairs emerged as nothing less than a component essential to victory in the Cold War.

Despite remarkable cooperation among the AAIA, the NCAI, and other organizations, the campaign in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 3 yielded only a partial victory. Representatives from the Interior Department and the BIA paralyzed the supporters' efforts when they declined to participate in the Senate hearings, deemed the resolution unnecessary, and recommended that no action be taken. When Congress recessed in January 1958, the resolution died. This surge of activism, however, influenced the Eisenhower administration's decision to retreat from immediate termination. In September 1958, Interior Secretary Fred Seaton announced that the severance of federal trust status would occur only after a tribe had become self-sufficient and given its consent. "Surely the Secretary did not mean

<sup>30</sup> Senese, *Self-Determination*, 32n.41. See also U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs*, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957).

<sup>31</sup> Oliver La Farge, "Annual Report, April 11, 1957," *Indian Affairs* 22 (September 1957), 10.



that where Indians did not accept termination, they would merely be allowed to drift,” La Farge commented shortly thereafter. Rather, he took Seaton’s words to mean that the BIA would promote Native-initiated community development programs, assist with the return of Indian land to tribal ownership, and support the strengthening of tribal governments. This position, he concluded, “harmonizes with the spirit of S. Con. Res. 3, the American Indian ‘Point IV’ resolution, which Indians and Indian-interest groups have so strongly supported.”<sup>32</sup>

The BIA did not move far enough in the direction La Farge had hoped, but his association could look with satisfaction upon the currency that the idea of an American Indian Point IV program had gained in the public sphere during the preceding two years.<sup>33</sup> An essay drafted by U.S. Representative George S. McGovern (D-S.D.), an ardent supporter of American Indians, spoke to the staying power of the rationale the association had so effectively fashioned. He predicated his call for a more concerted effort to reform Indian affairs on “the fact that our handling of our minorities is, in the eyes of a world population increasingly critical of our moral stance, a measure of our sincerity.”<sup>34</sup>

#### CONTRADICTION

The Cold War struggle for the hearts and minds of developing nations provided fertile ground for advocates of change at home. It allowed the Association on American Indian Affairs and the National Congress of American Indians to conceptualize tribes as communities emerging from colonialism rather than minorities desiring inte-

<sup>32</sup> Oliver La Farge, “Editorial,” *Indian Affairs* 28 (November 1958), 1. As yet another example of the infusion of Cold War politics into Indian affairs, bureaucrats within the BIA charged that the AAIA’s “publications, which point up the dire conditions under which our Indian population lives and criticizes the Bureau for failure to correct them, are used by the Communists as propaganda material.” Richard Schifter to Glenn Emmons, August 21, 1958, attached to Schifter to Oliver La Farge, August 21, 1958, box 84, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>33</sup> LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, December 14, 1956, folder 3, and Oliver La Farge, “AAIA Annual Report,” April 11, 1957, folder 4, box 43, AAIA Archives.

<sup>34</sup> George S. McGovern, “The ‘Inconvenient’ American Indian,” n.d., box 134, folder 14, AAIA Archives.

gration. Moreover, it invested Indian affairs with global implications. But the effort to draw parallels between international and domestic issues was not without its problems. Consider again the opening quotations from Adlai Stevenson, defender of the liberal faith and champion of democracy. The questions he recorded came from individuals who were skeptical of U.S. foreign policy, and his response to the charge that America had an imperialist past of its own is instructive. "All I can say is, Americans are not unmindful of what happened to the Indians a long time ago. But likewise, they are not aware of nourishing a double standard," Stevenson opined. "The reason may well lie in the luck of the American colonists in settling a territory so sparsely inhabited as the North American Continent. I do not defend the treatment of our Indians in all respects, but the sparseness of the indigenous population quickly permitted the American colonists to think of themselves as the real 'natives' and, after achieving their own independence, to transfer their aspirations to all peoples seeking self-determination."<sup>35</sup>

Behind liberalism's promise of self-determination lingered these seldom articulated assumptions about modern and tribal peoples—assumptions about the direction of change, the past and future, the way people imagined the communities in which they and others belonged. To be sure, Stevenson merely reflected conventional wisdom when he offered these painfully ahistorical rationalizations for dispossession and conquest. Indeed, most Americans had long internalized this rendition of the past, this notion that Indians had to perish in order for the American nation to be fully realized. Without this national narrative, how could Americans "transfer their aspirations" to the rest of the world?

A similar spirit informed Point IV. Modernization ideology grew out of profoundly ethnocentric ideas that assigned the United States the role of uplifting parts of the world it had defined as underdeveloped, of improving the lives of people it considered culturally backward. Take, for instance, the language used in a 1952 study of the relationship between Point IV and Indian affairs, written by Joseph McCaskill, a staff member within the Department of the Interior. It begins with the argument that America's mission in the world rests on the conviction that "we live in one world—that the achievement of peace demands that we live as neighbors—that we cannot build a

<sup>35</sup> Stevenson, "Support of Nationalism," 33–34.



high fence around the grounds of our palatial mansion and look down our noses at our poorer neighbors.” McCaskill then layers some altruistic words over this condescending view of the rest of the globe: “[Point IV] assumes that in one world we must have a strong world economy—we cannot live in peace with a small segment of the world highly industrialized and developed while the greater part of the free world suffers from hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and disease.”<sup>36</sup>

Point IV, then, represented well-intentioned liberalism at its best and perhaps its most naïve. Federal policy makers seem to have convinced themselves that formerly dominated peoples would embrace the very nations they had come to define as imperialists, based on words alone. But there was more to the undertaking. “Point Four is not intended to be a giant give away program,” McCaskill observed in his study. “[I]t is not charity—it is primarily a policy and program of enlightened self-interest.” The great payoff for the United States, of course, would be the return on the capital investments necessary for these developing nations to reach the “take-off point,” as well as the new import and export markets that these nascent consumer societies represented. Surely large segments of the populations of Africa, South America, Asia, and the Middle East understood this observation to mean that the United States had interests more complicated than the extension of freedom and democracy.

Although Oliver La Farge and LaVerne Madigan did not intend to reflect this kind of arrogance, their association had long confronted the perception that it was a benevolent outsider. An exchange between AAIA General Counsel Felix Cohen and then Executive Director Alexander Lesser in 1948 is particularly illustrative. Cohen warned that the organization’s uncritical embrace of the term “assimilation” would not be well received in Indian Country. As a Jew, Cohen understood the connotations it held for peoples from minority cultures. “I am a little concerned to find Indians looking upon the Association on American Indian Affairs in somewhat the same light as those who like the bottle might look upon the W.C.T.U.,” he

<sup>36</sup>These quotations are taken from Joseph C. McCaskill, “Inter-Relationship of Point Four and Indian Administration,” pp. 5–6, box 151, folder 6, AAIA Archives. McCaskill was an assistant to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1939 to 1946 and then served in the Interior Department’s Division of International Activities from 1951 to 1958. This is the same report Oliver La Farge referred to as “most illuminating.”

observed. "There is no question about the sincerity or high-mindedness of the would-be reformer, but there is a natural resentment at being treated as something to be reformed by persons with a 'holier-than-thou' attitude." "If anybody should tell me, a Jew of Russian descent, that I ought to be beneficially assimilated in the Anglo-Saxon protestant main stream of American life," Cohen concluded bluntly, "my first impulse would be to punch my would-be reformer in the nose."<sup>37</sup>

The architects of American foreign policy and the American Indian Point IV Program at home probably did not anticipate the consequences of nationalism—in this case, the driving force behind the "punch in the nose" referred to by Cohen. To La Farge, Madigan, and others, the parallel with modernization and decolonization must have seemed irresistible. To them, Point IV represented a way to extend to the rest of the world the best of what America had to offer. But they did not fully appreciate the implications of their call for self-determination. They did not understand that their invocation of this term and the cluster of concepts associated with it could be perceived in precisely the same way as assimilation. They did not anticipate that the very role of non-Indians in the reform movement would be called into question—that they would be defined as patronizing helpers and, by extension, part of the problem of colonialism itself.

The American Indian Chicago Conference (AICC) of June 1961 brought some of these uncomfortable realities to the fore. University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax served as the catalyst for what would become a weeklong meeting of American Indian leaders that set as its goal the development of a comprehensive statement on Indian affairs, a "Declaration of Indian Purpose." No less than the AAIA, Tax connected Indian issues to those of developing nations and thought that the Chicago conference might contribute to a final resolution of "domestic 'colonial' problems" and thereby "provide patterns for constructive democratic action in similar situations all over the world."<sup>38</sup> "The present moment in world history with new nations emerging from colonial experiences," declared another

<sup>37</sup>Felix Cohen to Alexander Lesser, May 18, 1948, box 36, folder 5, AAIA Archives.

<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "The Voice of the American Indian: Report on the American Indian Chicago Conference," *Current Anthropology* 2, no. 5 (December 1961), 482.

justification for holding the Chicago conference, “provides additional urgency to the task and significance beyond the desperate needs of American Indians alone.”<sup>39</sup>

Committed though it was to community development and self-determination, the Association on American Indian Affairs did not endorse the Chicago conference. Instead, the AAIA cooperated with and threw its support behind the Commission on the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian. Underwritten by the Fund for the Republic, this four-year project began during the AAIA’s push for the Point IV resolution in 1957 and was set to culminate in a published report just two months prior to the convening of the Chicago conference.<sup>40</sup> Like the association, the Fund for the Republic commission consisted almost exclusively of prominent non-Indian intellectuals and former federal bureaucrats.<sup>41</sup> While it endeavored to solve “the problems of American Indians in the American society,” Sol Tax subtly portrayed the commission as actually being symptomatic of them.<sup>42</sup> “The AICC belongs to American Indians and they will plan and complete it in whatever manner they deem

<sup>39</sup> Walter Taylor to Dear Friends, January 1961, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives. See also Joan Ablon, “The American Indian Chicago Conference,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 1, no. 2 (January 1962); AICC Records, box 1, folder: “Historical: Beginnings of AICC”; Lurie, “Voice of the American Indian,” 481, 497.

<sup>40</sup> The Fund for the Republic was a nonprofit organization established by the Ford Foundation in 1951 to resist threats to basic American freedoms. On the AAIA’s early involvement, see Proceedings of a Meeting of the Commission on the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian with Representatives of Voluntary Agencies in the Field of Indian Affairs, February 18, 1957, box 107, folder 18, Archives of the Fund for the Republic, box 100, folder 7, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

<sup>41</sup> The one Indian member of the commission was W. W. Keeler, Cherokee principal chief and executive vice president of Phillips Petroleum. Keeler was a controversial figure within the Cherokee Nation because he was appointed by President Truman to his position as principal chief, not chosen by the Cherokees themselves. For a fascinating study that situates this controversy in the context of identity, see Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). For a contemporary account of the conflict, see Albert L. Wahrhaftig, “Making Do with the Dark Meat: A Report on the Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma,” in *American Indian Economic Development*, ed. Sam Stanley (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 411–510.

<sup>42</sup> Hallock Hoffman to John Davidson, February 18, 1960, Fund for the Republic Archives. This exchange took place as the commission prepared for the formal release of its report to the public.

most constructive,” one informational letter read, stressing the “need to honor the right of Indians to this freedom from well-intentioned interference,” particularly in light of the long history of debilitating paternalism fostered by the BIA.<sup>43</sup>

The Fund for the Republic commission released its report, “A Program for Indian Citizens,” on March 15, 1961. As a critique of what it termed “precipitous acts” of termination, the document received the endorsement of both the Association on American Indian Affairs and the National Congress of American Indians.<sup>44</sup> But beneath this superficial show of support lingered grave concerns among members of the latter organization. From their perspective, the report struck a decidedly paternalistic tone and did little more than sketch the outlines of a more humane strategy of substituting American citizenship for Indian political identities. This emphasis on citizenship resonated with the racial egalitarianism common in postwar liberal circles, but it signaled to Indians that the objective would remain to make them legally indistinct from other minority groups. As early as February 1957, NCAI Executive Director Helen Peterson had warned the commission that “Indian problems aren’t civil rights problems.” “In the general trend toward integration, this age may wipe out tribes which 50 years from now we will be trying to resurrect in an artificial fashion,” she argued. “You must try to disentangle Indian rights from civil rights and integration.”<sup>45</sup> The commission had clearly failed to

<sup>43</sup> Walter Taylor to Dear Friends, January 1961, p. 3, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>44</sup> O. Meredith Wilson to Robert M. Hutchings, September 20, 1960, box 100, folder 7, and “John O. Crow Named Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Member of Advisory Board on Indian Affairs,” *National Fellowship of Indian Workers* 74 (Spring 1961), 8, box 101, folder 5, Fund for the Republic Archives; *The Indian: America’s Unfinished Business; Report of the Commission on the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian*, compiled by William A. Brophy and Sophie D. Aberle (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 213; *NCAI Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (May 1961). For more on the Fund for the Republic report, see Senese, *Self-Determination*, 43–54; Alvin Josephy Jr., ed., *Red Power: The American Indians’ Fight for Freedom* (1971; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 31–35; and Thomas Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961–1969* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 15–17.

<sup>45</sup> Proceedings of a Meeting of the Commission on the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian with Representatives of Voluntary Agencies in the Field of Indian Affairs, February 18, 1957, p. 10, box 107, folder 18, Archives of the Fund for the Republic.

make the distinction.<sup>46</sup> D'Arcy McNickle (Salish-Kootenai), a charter member of the NCAI and one of the era's leading intellectuals, reaffirmed the point several years later when he reviewed the report for a publisher and recommended against its publication.<sup>47</sup>

The Association on American Indian Affairs considered Sol Tax's close affiliation with the National Congress of American Indians and his stance toward the involvement of non-Indians in the Chicago conference problematic. Although crises had at times fostered alliances between the AAIA and NCAI, the two organizations continued to view one another as competitors. Moreover, AAIA General Counsel Richard Schifter expressed particular concern that, contrary to assurances from the Chicago conference organizers, the voices of tribes that did not belong to the NCAI, and especially those of common Indian people, would be drowned out by elected tribal elites.<sup>48</sup> A circumspect La Farge ultimately wrote the project off as "wooly," while Madigan feared it would become "a pig in a poke." They warned that the NCAI would explode in an embarrassing display of tribal infighting and urged Tax not to make the necessarily messy process of reaching consensus a public spectacle. In the meantime, La Farge, Madigan, and Schifter concentrated their energies on influencing the

<sup>46</sup> As but one example of this attitude, commission member Charles Sprague wrote to his colleagues, "Only in the narrow sense are the Indian problems legal. They are primarily sociological and economic. The various units of government and the non-Indian population have responsibilities to the Indians; but the major responsibility falls on the Indians themselves. Their survival as a worthy people depends on how well they make adjustments for living in the modern world." Charles Sprague to Members of Commission, n.d., box 100, folder 8, Fund for the Republic Archives.

<sup>47</sup> F. S. Loescher to W. H. Ferry, January 26, 1956, box 101, folder 3, Philip E. Lienthal to Edward Reed, July 1, 1964, and Hallock Hoffman to Edward Reed, July 9, 1964, box 101, folder 7, Fund for the Republic Archives. McNickle had been recommended as a candidate for membership on the Commission for the Rights, Liberties, and Responsibilities of the American Indian, but W. W. Keeler withdrew the recommendation because "I am informed that he was publicly charged with being a Communist and never did file a slander suit or take any other steps to refute this charge." See W. W. Keeler to Dr. O. Meredith Wilson, November 29, 1956, box 101, folder 2, Fund for the Republic Archives.

<sup>48</sup> Joan Ablon to Sophie Aberle, January 5, 1961, and Nancy O. Lurie to Aberle, March 25, 1961, box 4, folder: "A General," and Lurie to Theodore Stern, May 7, 1961, box 8, folder: "N.O. Lurie, April-May 1961," AICC Records; Richard Schifter to LaVerne Madigan, December 15, 1960, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

Kennedy administration's appointment of a new Interior secretary and Commissioner of Indian Affairs.<sup>49</sup>

The AAIA also concluded that "A Program for Indian Citizens" had said all there really was to say—that recommendations more strident than gradual termination would be implausible. In 1959, two years after the AAIA's last effort to pass an American Indian Point IV resolution had been frustrated by inaction, the organization renewed the effort in the House and Senate. Their proposal not only went down to defeat but also prompted the introduction of a counter resolution that would have stoked the fires of coercive termination. Oliver La Farge learned from this experience the virtues of not waking a sleeping giant.<sup>50</sup> "In all our actions," he wrote to Sol Tax, "we must bear in mind that a powerful terminationist element still exists in Congress and has by no means given up its fight."<sup>51</sup> Thus, when he warned Tax in 1961 of the unintended consequences of trying to revoke the dreaded policy, he spoke from a very recent and personal experience. Strident liberationist rhetoric would stir up faith in an "enthusiastic unreality," La Farge warned, leaving Indians with "feelings of disallusionment [*sic*] and frustration."<sup>52</sup>

Planning for the American Indian Chicago Conference carried on without the AAIA, and the June proceedings garnered widespread media coverage and critical acclaim. Well over 400 representatives from ninety bands and tribes and approximately 150 non-Indian registrants assembled at the University of Chicago.<sup>53</sup> The resulting "Declaration of Indian Purpose" made a tempered call for a definitive break with the past. It laid claim to Indians' right to maintain

<sup>49</sup> Oliver La Farge to LaVerne Madigan, December 6, 16, 1960, Madigan to La Farge and Richard Schifter, December 23, 1960, and Madigan to Sol Tax, February 28, 1961, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>50</sup> "Termination Forces Attack Again," *Indian Affairs* 32 (May 1959), 1. For the AAIA's legal interpretation of HCR 108, see Hecht, *Oliver La Farge*, 225–27.

<sup>51</sup> Oliver La Farge to Sol Tax, January 3, 1961, box 59, folder 6, and La Farge to Tax, May 26, 1961, box 59, folder 7, AAIA Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Oliver La Farge to Sol Tax, January 3, 1961, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Many Chicago Indians attended but did not register. AICC co-coordinator Nancy Lurie placed the attendance at approximately 800 Native Americans. She also noted that about half of those who did register were not on the mailing list, leading her to speculate that perhaps twice as many Indians as the 5,000 on the mailing list had, in some way, been made aware of the conference. Lurie, "Voice of the American Indian," 489–90.

their cultural distinctiveness, demanded the revocation of HCR 108, and addressed a broad array of health, education, welfare, and resource development issues. The declaration made specific reference to Point IV, and its philosophy undergirded the entire document. Specifically, the authors demanded “assistance, technical and financial, for the time needed, however long that may be, to regain in the America of the space age some measure of the adjustment [Indians] enjoyed as the original possessors of their native land.” “[T]he problem we raise affects the standing which our nation sustains before world opinion,” the declaration proclaimed, once again invoking the Cold War imperative.<sup>54</sup>

Edward P. Dozier (Santa Clara Pueblo), a professor of anthropology at the University of Arizona and an AAIA board member, delivered the conference’s keynote address. Before the assembled delegates, he echoed themes that had been of central importance throughout the postwar period—liberty, democracy, individual freedom, and, above all else, community survival. “American Indians can be integrated into the total American society without giving up the inherent right of human beings to be different,” Dozier told his audience. “Freedom to be completely assimilated as individuals is always a live option, but freedom to be related to the total society as culturally differentiated groups is also possible.” This relationship included legal separateness. Dozier linked Indians’ struggle within the United States to the global process of decolonization. “To remain Indians and yet Americans,” he concluded, “we believe to be a democratic principle and a human right in a free world.”<sup>55</sup>

At first glance, there appear to be no discernible differences among the ideas articulated in the “Declaration of Indian Purpose,” Dozier’s keynote address, and the language employed by the AAIA during its long battle against termination. And yet LaVerne Madigan and Oliver La Farge not only disassociated themselves from the Chicago conference but went so far as to discourage the *New York Times* from running an editorial on the proceedings. Two weeks after its conclusion, Madigan tersely summarized her feelings toward the endeavor: “The

<sup>54</sup> American Indian Chicago Conference, “Declaration of Indian Purpose: The Voice of the American Indian” (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), 4–5, 7, 16–18, 19, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Dozier, Keynote Address, pp. 3–4, box 59, folder 7, AAIA Archives.



Conference is over. R.I.P.”<sup>56</sup> The source for these underlying tensions did not derive from the words deployed by the various constituents. Indian and non-Indian reformers had come to share a common language, one founded on the premise that tribes represented developing nations emerging from colonialism. Rather, the fault lines grew from the contrasting meanings assigned to this familiar stock of words.

The late Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), a former executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, captured this distinction succinctly. Like his predecessors, he understood the implications of nationalist thinking to be that non-Indians would be kept “as friends” but moved “away from decision-making situations.”<sup>57</sup> Non-Indian organizations mouthed the rhetoric of decolonization, Deloria contended, but had no intentions of yielding power. The AAIA leadership saw things differently. In their minds, the parallel they drew with Point IV did not harbor a contradiction, and they saw no reason for the AAIA to withdraw from the scene. But in the tidal shift toward American Indian nationalism, evidenced by the June 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, non-Indians found the ground slipping from beneath them—as did the older generation of tribal leaders who dominated its proceedings.

The founding of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in August 1961 forcefully demonstrated the shift of power. To this younger cohort, appeals to federal initiatives such as Point IV, whether invoked by Indians or non-Indians, sounded like hollow platitudes.<sup>58</sup> Clyde Warrior (Ponca), who attended the Chicago conference and cofounded the new organization, spoke openly on this theme before an audience of college students in 1966. “What was happening [at the conference] was these tribal officials, or finks, were just going into that gear of appealing to the Great White Father again,” Warrior recalled. “You know, ‘Really, we like you Big Daddy, keep sending

<sup>56</sup> LaVerne Madigan to Oliver La Farge, June 29, 1961, and La Farge to Madigan, June 23, 1961, box 59, folder 6, AAIA Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., interview by the author, tape recording, Golden, Colorado, October 19, 2001. Deloria later wrote a devastating critique of anthropologists and the paternalism of the American Indian Chicago Conference. See Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969; repr., San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1971; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> *The Indian Progress* 5 (March 30, 1962), box 9, folder: “D’Arcy McNickle,” AICC Records.



us things, keep programming for us that's causing us more frustration... Keep doing things that'll break up the social system. Keep doing things that'll bust families further apart.'" "It got to the end where we couldn't hack it any longer," he fumed. "We were just completely disgusted with it."<sup>59</sup> Fellow NIYC founder Mel Thom (Walker River Paiute) put it even more bluntly: "[W]e felt that Indian affairs were so bad that it was time to raise some hell."<sup>60</sup>

We cannot fully understand how LaVerne Madigan and Oliver La Farge would have made sense of these incipient rebellions, how they might have reconciled the AAIA to a punch in the nose from American Indian nationalism. Tragedies took both of their lives prematurely. On August 2, 1962, La Farge lost his long struggle with emphysema, laboring hard in the public sphere up until the moment of his death. LaVerne Madigan's passing preceded La Farge's by a year. During a family vacation in northern Vermont, a casual morning horseback ride ended in disaster. Under circumstances that remain elusive, she lost control of her mount and died from head injuries suffered when she attempted to vault off it.<sup>61</sup> Though the AAIA continued to promote a variety of community-based programs in the following decades, it never regained the status it had attained by the early 1960s.



The background of the movement for an American Indian Point IV program reaffirms the importance of thinking seriously about the ways in which domestic politics played out against the backdrop of international affairs. But the predicament the Association on American Indian Affairs found itself in by the early 1960s suggests that the story cannot be so simply told. It was one thing to invoke a parallel between colonialism and U.S. treatment of Native Americans, and quite another to grapple with the unintended consequences of having

<sup>59</sup> Clyde Warrior, Lecture on Social Movements, ca. 1966, tape recording, Montith College, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, in the personal papers of Albert L. Wahrhaftig, in the author's possession.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968), 40.

<sup>61</sup> "Oliver La Farge," *Indian Affairs* 52 (August 1963), 1; "LaVerne Madigan," *Indian Affairs* 48 (October 1962), 1. For a moving biography of Madigan by her son, see Bordewich, *My Mother's Ghost*.

made the connection. American Indian nationalists did not hesitate to point out what they perceived to be the association's contradiction. A commitment to decolonization, in their minds, meant that the organizations of old, dominated by non-Indians, would have to abandon the field and allow Native activists to speak for themselves. To the extent that they did not, they became symbols of colonialism in their own right. This ironic conclusion—whether fairly or unfairly drawn—reveals yet another layer of complexity to the story of Indian politics in Cold War America.