

During 1992, immigration reemerged as one of the most contentious issues debated on the American political Right. Associate editor Wayne Lutton draws our attention to a new study that identifies the various factions and competing ideologies and indicates the direction in which the immigration debate is moving.

The Conservative Crack-up

A Book Review by Wayne Lutton

THE CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT

By Paul Gottfried

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Ironically, the fall of the Berlin Wall also marked the end of the American conservative movement that took form in the 1950s. Focused as it was on militant anti-Communism, it is not surprising that the often uncomfortable alliance that witnessed its greatest "success" during the Reagan Presidency has collapsed.

Paul Gottfried, a professor of the humanities at Elizabethtown College and a veteran of the intellectual wars on the Right, has written a highly readable and remarkably informative account of the disintegration of post-World War II conservatism. His study includes a review of the fortunes of the erstwhile Libertarian movement, which has been torn by fierce factional infighting. Now, various "libertarian" and "conservative" factions are finding common cause.

Readers of this journal will find his discussion of how sundry "conservative" elements treat the topic of immigration enlightening. The Catholic Right and many religious Fundamentalists who oppose abortion have tended to be pro-immigration, arguing that natives of Latin America should be especially encouraged to migrate here, since they are said to embrace "strong family values." Neo-conservatives, basically a collection of "Great Society" liberal Democrats (long centered around Norman Podhoretz and *Commentary* magazine) came to endorse bigger military budgets, support for Israel, and the armed export of "democracy." They, too, have consistently opposed efforts to restrict immigration. Ben Wattenberg, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is a representative spokesman for this camp.

Aside from those who support open immigration for various philosophical, political, or narrow economic reasons [viz. *The Wall Street Journal*], Gottfried reveals a more sinister side of the immigration debate. He points out that the Heritage Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that has long influenced Republican policy makers, has received important financial underwriting from Far Eastern business and government interests. It comes as little surprise, then, that Heritage has aggressively championed "free trade" and increased Third World

immigration. Heritage has vociferously promoted the anti-restrictionist views of Julian Simon and joined with professional Hispanic activists in opposing the key employer sanctions provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

The Heritage Foundation has not acted alone. As Dick Kirchten observed in *National Journal*, "immigration is a growth industry in the think tanks of the Right." Gottfried documents how conservative proponents of immigration reform have been the subject of malicious personal attacks as well as efforts to "de-fund" institutions and journals which air restrictionist views.

In his final chapter, "The Unraveling of the Conservative Movement," Gottfried considers the recent reemergence of support for immigration reform among elements of the "Right." These include "right-wing greens" — cultural traditionalists who combine a strong pro-environmentalist posture with calls for immigration restrictions — and the so-called Paleoconservatives — an alliance of Old Right traditionalists, libertarians, and neo-mercantilist nationalists who have joined together under the auspices of the John Randolph Club, and are often found in print in the pages of *Chronicles* magazine.

A major theme of *The Conservative Movement* is that "traditional political labels are becoming increasingly irrelevant." What is now taking place is a realignment of interests that transcend the old notions of what constitutes Left and Right. ■