TERROR

AND

LIBERALISM

Paul Berman

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723. Paul Berman Terror and Liberalism

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tudes of the years around 1950, the quaking fear of Soviet communism, the new radicalism of that era—these things did lead to problems later on. Soviet communism lost its sting, after a while. But some of the liberals and radicals, in the fervor of their anti-totalitarianism, failed to notice the change in circumstances, and they ended up cheering on the plunge into Indochina. In proposing to resurrect the term "new radicalism" and the spirit of the anti-Communist left, I do not wish to forget that particular lesson—the memory of how some of the liberals and radicals of half a century ago, in their fierceness, lost the ability in later years to make sound and nuanced judgments. If Lasch's book casts a small shadow over the term "new radicalism," warning against any new such error, I figure that the shadow improves the term. "Be radical, be radical, be not too damned radical," Whitman said.

X

Today the totalitarian danger has not yet lost its sting, and there is no wisdom in claiming otherwise. The literature and language of the mid-twentieth century speak to us about danger of that sort. That is the thesis of my book.

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