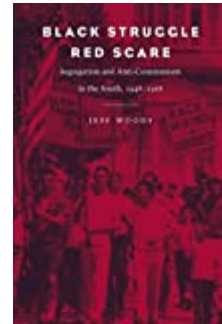




Jeff Woods. *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004. ix + 282 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2875-6; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8071-2926-5.



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Red- and Black-Baiters Unite

Up until the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, white southerners had enjoyed a fairly free hand in maintaining a racially separate society. Free from interest or intervention from outsiders, as northerners paid little attention to racial arrangements in the South as they had issues of race and immigration of their own, white southerners developed a separate and unequal way of life. *Brown*, and with it the worldwide attention Little Rock received, changed the “hands-off” policy of both northern liberals and the federal government. As more intense scrutiny of southern race relations became the order of the day, the white southern massive resistance movement looked for new ways to fight desegregation. Black-baiting had long been a tool of segregationists, but with the advent of the Cold War they found an ally in anti-Communists; black-baiting joined with red-baiting to gain national support.

In *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968*, Jeff Woods argues persuasively that many white southerners had a long-standing fear of violent black insurgence aided by outsiders. With the end of slavery not much changed as

far as white southerners’ view of blacks was concerned. Blacks were thought to be “antisouthern, anti-American, and [still] susceptible to manipulation by foreign agents,” which was essential for tying integration to a Communist conspiracy (p. 16). Moreover, Woods contends that the connection of Communism with integration gained allies in the rest of the nation for southern massive resistance to desegregation. Together segregation and anti-Communism were important underpinnings of a radical brand of southern nationalism. Woods tells the story of the struggle to maintain southern nationalism by exploring how a white southern elite used “an interlocking network of local, state, and federal institutions [to] direct ... the southern red scare” (p. 5).

For those of us who study the South, and more particularly southern race relations, there is seldom a shortage of current monographs on the subject for our perusal. Previous works have placed mid-twentieth-century southern race relations in a national context, and have connected the civil rights struggle with the Cold War, McCarthyism, and anticommunism in general. Most recently, Mary Dudziak, in her study of U.S. Cold

War foreign policy, *Cold War Civil Rights*, evinces the tension brought on by the Cold War between America's foreign and domestic racial policies.[1] While doing so, she demonstrates the incongruity of these policies in the face of U.S. support for third world struggles to extricate themselves from the pit of colonialism and reluctance at home to support the African-American struggle for equality. Jeff Woods's *Black Struggle, Red Scare* not only fits into this field, but also provides a new and interesting window into the period. Leaving the impact of homeland racial policy on foreign affairs to Dudziak, Woods examines the impact of the Red Scare on the struggle for integration in the American South.

Focusing on major characters from both sides—integrationists and segregationists—Woods weaves an interesting and absorbing story of the attempts of white southerners to tie integration to the Communist plot to take over the United States of America as can be illustrated through a brief summary of the book.

Chapter 1, "Red and Black," serves as Woods's introduction to the subject. He furnishes a brief glimpse into the history of race relations in the South through a review of some black insurrections and their leaders. These revolts fueled the fears and concerns of southern slaveholders who believed that outsiders, in this case, communities of runaway slaves, might provide the catalyst for widespread black rebellion. Moreover, according to Woods, "southern fears of outside agitators and black rebellion contributed significantly to the social, cultural, and psychological tension that gave rise to southern nationalism and a separate Confederate state" (p. 14). Following the Civil War, many white southerners viewed freed blacks as being anti-American and potentially subversive because they were understood to lack a natural understanding and belief in the fundamentals that made America strong: capitalism and democracy. Today this view has been transferred by nativists to those immigrants and sons and daughters of immigrants that differ from the accepted cultural norm. Woods traces the developing idea that black Americans had a subversive nature and that they were susceptible to outside agitation, and demonstrates how red- and black-baiters came together to fight integration.

Woods focuses on the early attempts by both state and federal entities to tie blacks and civil rights organizations to the Communist Party in chapter 2. The major target of these campaigns was the NAACP. Early on, the attacks were successful as the NAACP and its members were forced to expend their energies in fighting

charges of being "red" rather than promoting civil rights for black Americans. Although there was some truth to the charges that Communists had infiltrated the NAACP, the spotlight shone on it by state and federal authorities led the NAACP leadership, in particular Roy Wilkins, to purge the organization of communist influences.

"Little HUACs and Little FBI's," chapter 3, is a discussion of the tactics the FBI employed in what its director, J. Edgar Hoover, saw as a battle against subversives and commies in the American South. Caught in the paradox of defending African-American civil liberties while pursuing reds believed to have infiltrated civil rights organizations, the FBI turned to the states to fight the Communist threat. In effect, the FBI cloned eleven miniature HUACs and FBI's to carry on the work of harassing integrationists. State organizations, uninhibited by federal law, employed state laws and state investigations in order to slow the work of civil rights groups.

Chapter 4, "Conspiracy So Immense", provides a look at the impact of court decisions on red and black investigations. Woods notes that the courts ruled in favor of those investigating the black and red connection, pointing out that First Amendment rights were not being violated. Most striking, perhaps, courts ruled that red and black investigators could continue to disseminate their findings, however misleading they might have been.

Court support of tactics used by federal investigators led many civil rights leaders (Martin Luther King, Jr., in particular) to realize that while they might ultimately win the fight against state and federal anti-communist groups, they could not and would not win the war for the hearts and minds of the general public. Therefore, as Woods notes, "the key for the black civil rights movement was to denounce both communism and the McCarthyite tactics of segregationists. Only then could it maintain a moral position that would resonate with moderate southerners and the majority of Americans" (p. 168).

Although red- and black-baiters found support in the courts, the same did not hold true in Congress. Chapters 6 and 7 provide examinations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, respectively. Woods provides a description of the struggle and ultimate defeat of white southern forces seeking to block the Civil Rights Act. Several reasons contributed to their defeat: President Kennedy's assassination; lack of assistance from the FBI; and the fact that people finally tired of the radical antics of southern politicians. Although southern segregationists failed in their efforts to block the Voting Rights Act in Congress, they gained ground

in other ways. According to Woods, mounting violence and brutality began to have its intended effect and caused a permanent crack to develop within the civil rights movement as divergent groups, like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), argued over philosophy and methods of response.

The fissure that developed within the movement resulted in the rise of Black Nationalism. It, along with the anti-Vietnam War stance of King and other civil rights leaders, and the riots that swept through many major U.S. cities, culminated in a white backlash. This backlash by many whites outside the South not only resulted in a loss of sympathy and support for the civil rights movement, but it convinced “[s]egregationists ... that they had allies outside the South and that red and black issues played a significant role in the law-and-order politics of the late 1960s” (p. 253).

Woods concludes that by the fall of 1968, due to a decline in the Cold War, southern red- and black-baiters had lost their advantage. The pro-segregation leaders of the southern red scare had fallen by one means or another from positions of power. Moreover, “the issues on which the scare had been built ... faded” (p. 257).

Woods has pulled together extensive research from various manuscript collections like those of Presidents

Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, as well as George Wallace and the White Citizens Councils. He has also made broad use of government documents and reports, records of pertinent Supreme Court cases, newspapers, and periodicals. Woods has also reviewed and summarized the important books and articles that relate to his topic.

This study is an expansion of Woods’s dissertation, “Maroon Scare: Segregation and Anticommunism in the South, 1954-1968,” and it suffers somewhat from its broad view. Keeping up with the numerous organizations and individuals of both civil rights activists and local, state, and federal anti-communists/segregationists is at times a task. That caveat aside, Woods’s method of providing case studies within the context of his chronological narrative works well.

A substantial amount of research has been done on both the Red Scare and attempts to end segregation in the South. Woods’s joining of the two with his penetrating analysis makes this a good and important work that fills a void in the literature.

Note

[1]. Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America Series (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

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