



Rethinking the 1950s: How Anticommunism and the Cold War Made America Liberal

Jennifer A. Delton

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Historians generally portray the 1950s as a conservative era when anticommunism and the Cold War subverted domestic reform, crushed political dissent, and ended liberal dreams of social democracy. These years, historians tell us, represented a turn to the right, a negation of New Deal liberalism, an end to reform. Jennifer A. Delton argues that, far from subverting the New Deal state, anticommunism and the Cold War enabled, fulfilled, and even surpassed the New Deal's reform agenda. Anticommunism solidified liberal political power and the Cold War justified liberal goals such as jobs creation, corporate regulation, economic redevelopment, and civil rights. She shows how despite President Eisenhower's professed conservatism, he maintained the highest tax rates in U.S. history, expanded New Deal programs, and supported major civil rights reforms.

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