

EUGENE LYONS

## IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION REALLY THREATENED?

*The Hysteria Over Hysteria*

THE RECENT ELECTION campaign was not exactly an inhibited, tongue-tied and fear-ridden affair. Speech was as lustily free-for-all as ever in our history and opinions as unbridled. The Democratic candidate did not hesitate to accept the support of the left-wing Americans for Democratic Action or to surround himself with brain-trusters of pinkish hues. The Progressive Party put up a noisy fight on its Communist line, and the Communist Party proper ran candidates. Not only was there no clamor for repression of unorthodox views, but the major candidates inveighed repeatedly against any tendency to cheat the Bill of Rights.

Yet the campaign — if our em-

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battled "liberals" are to be believed — took place in the midst of anti-Red hysteria amounting to a reign of terror, marked by black fear, witch hunts, character assassination, and thought control. Lamentations on this score could be heard even above the tumult of the election-eering.

The theory that these United States are in the throes of unlimited hysteria, trampling wildly on customary freedoms, is no longer a matter of surmise in certain intellectual precincts. It is a fixed article of faith, impervious to contrary evidence or argument. Declamation against "the terror" is the shortest road to acceptance by the "progressive" brethren and denial of its prevalence is, by the same token, the shortest road to damnation as a hopeless reactionary. The circumstance that the American people seem blissfully ignorant of their nervous disorder is brushed aside

as irrelevant, if not additional confirmation of their distressing condition.

When I ventured to suggest, in a letter to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, that the anguished outcries over hysteria are largely a case of jitters on the Left, she told me off as another victim of the disease. My letter, she averred, "is sufficient proof that hysteria exists." Doubt of the diagnosis, in other words, is in itself a proof of the malady — which in effect makes belief in the thesis of hysteria-rampant mandatory for the kind of people Mrs. Roosevelt typifies.

Disciplined comrades presumably are plugging this thesis with tongue in cheek. But the unaffiliated liberals, it seems plain, are in deadly earnest. They could hardly be so shrill in bewailing the end of our freedoms (among them, paradoxically, the freedom to wail) if they were only play-acting. They would seem to be honestly alarmed. The death rattle of our throttled liberties is sharp in their ears; if it escapes Americans at large the fault, of course, is with a grosser sense of hearing.

At its shallowest this hysteria over hysteria is on display in a recent book by the Washington *Post* cartoonist, Herbert Block. This fellow had himself a wonderful time a couple of years back lampooning Whittaker Chambers. But his palpable blunder on that score has not

dampened Block's ardor for ridiculing anti-Communists and pooh-poohing American concern over Red plotting. He concedes that there are Soviet agents and spies at work but doesn't think "we need to go jumping out of windows or belting each other in a frenzy."

The implication — and that's the gist of the hysteria thesis — is that we are in truth behaving in this irrational fashion. The efforts to expose and neutralize those spies and agents Mr. Block boils down to this caricature: "A kind of unorganized Un-American Revolution, in which the smear-bucket brigade has been trying to sack our institutions while hollering at us to look farther under the bed."

A HAZE of nightmarish melodrama, replete with villains and heroes, surrounds such trumpeters of hysteria. At Swarthmore College in 1951, for instance, "six bold men" staged a "gathering of the unterrified," to show that there "are at least six men who have not succumbed to hysteria." Six out of 160 million is not many, but still an item of hope. Their exploit demonstrated that "Americanism is not yet extinct" — going, that is to say, but not yet gone.

It was in these exorbitant terms, at any rate, that Gerald W. Johnson, a Baltimore pundit, reported the episode of derring-do in a book review in the *New York Times*

of January 6, 1952. But what, specifically, did the courageous sextette (five professors and a judge) do? Well, it appears that they gave a series of dullish lectures on American freedom today, reaching the unanimous verdict that it was moribund. Whether they were risking their lives or only their livelihoods is not clear from Mr. Johnson's story; in any event, all six are still alive and at their accustomed jobs. The consequence of their audacity was merely a book that drew friendly press notices.

In casting the lecturers as unterrified heroes the reviewer was not spoofing. He was simply following the logic of a fixed self-delusion. One assumes that he makes out his will before venturing to exercise freedom of speech or press.

A spate of other solemn books analyzing our presumptive hysteria has been published in the last few years. All have been favorably reviewed, and not one of the alarmed authors has been deprived of life, liberty or the pursuit of royalties. In addition, Cornell University has sponsored and the Rockefeller Foundation has financed a "scientific" inquiry into the state of our liberties. Four volumes have already appeared, all insisting that those liberties are mortally menaced by the mild public concern with the communist danger. This conclusion is not surprising, since the savants selected to make the study held

this view *before* they began their laboratory work. As yet not a single book disputing the hysteria thesis has been published, proving, I suppose, that the hysterics are in a comatose state.

In a foreword to one of the alarmist books, the late Harold L. Ickes stated, as if it were obvious fact requiring no substantiation, that "if a man is addicted to vodka and fresh caviar he is, *ipso facto*, a Russian, and therefore a Communist. . . . Frightened and hysterical citizens were ready to dive into the nearest cellar and refuse to go to bed at night unless every light were blazing." The unenlightened herd might not recognize this picture of their country but the liberal *conoscenti* credit it enthusiastically.

"There is a black fear in the country brought about by the witch hunters," Lester Markel, an editor of the *New York Times*, not long ago apprised a session of the American Library Association. Accordingly and properly, his Sunday sections have specialized in testimony to this effect by American and foreign writers, with nary a column to spare for contrary witness. Professor Henry Steele Commager believes "We are now embarked upon a campaign of suppression and oppression more violent, more reckless, more dangerous than any in our history. Already, he says, "teachers fear to discuss

certain subjects in the classroom.” Never mind the fact that he and a host of other pedagogues discuss them *ad nauseum* both in and outside the classroom.

These gentry seem oblivious to the humor of their loquacious protests against the abrogation of the right to talk and protest. Obsession has a logic all its own. One evening recently I saw and heard Arthur Garfield Hays, his mouth opened wide in a television screen close-up, shouting that in America no one any longer dares open his mouth. Another time millions of us heard Bertrand Russell, on a “Meet the Press” program, defend socialism while insisting that the expression of Leftist views is proscribed here.

ACCORDING to Raymond B. Fossdick, president emeritus of the Rockefeller Foundation, you are open to charges of Communism “if you favor fair-employment practices or are concerned about civil liberties, if you fight for the protection of the foreign-born, if you oppose religious prejudice or Jim Crowism. . . .” Which may come as shocking news to millions of Americans engaged in these causes without any sense of hazard.

Then there is the *expertise* of Bernard DeVoto, in the form of a prophecy in *Harper's Magazine*, couched, alas, in rather hysterically inelegant language. He foresaw that soon “fuzzy-minded nincompoops

and very clear-minded bastards are going to agitate for the dismissal of every college teacher who expresses an idea that would not have made Roscoe Conkling blush for its conservatism. . . . The hard-headed boys are going to hang the Communist label on everybody who holds ideas offensive to the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers or the steering committee of the Republican Party.”

About three years have passed since this dire prognosis was made, but frustrated legislators still find it tough going to hang the Communist label on Communists, let alone dissenters from N.A.M. views, and fellow-traveling teachers by the hundred still fill our colleges. The prophet, undeterred, keeps on yelling “Hysteria!” The DeVotos and Commagers will not be cheated of a beloved bogey by mere reality. A Professor Edmund N. Cahn, in reviewing one of the aforementioned books, exclaims in agony: “The gallant America — the one we revere — has been bullied long enough!”

Justice William O. Douglas runs an article in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* on “The Black Silence of Fear” — surely the loudest silence on record — and the theme is hammered home resoundingly in William Shirer's *Midcentury Journey*. A left-wing poet, Alfred Kreymborg, sings the selfsame song in free verse, a dirge for true Ameri-

cans "in their paralysis, or growing fear of the Brotherhood of Man."

For another exhibit of hysteria over hysteria, from the pile before me, I pull out the October 24, 1952 issue of *Science*, organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Even DeVoto and Markel seem cheerful alongside an article on "Dangers Confronting American Science," by a physics professor at Brooklyn College named Melba Phillips. She is gloomy and angry. Now that the government "screens" scientists in its employ, she sees them as "victims of oppression" and warns that "the freedoms we have lost already, or are now in danger," are not "as easily recoverable as has been assumed." Whether world tensions continue or are resolved in war, she declares, "we do not believe that scientific freedom — or any freedom, for that matter — has the ghost of a chance of surviving."

While the distressed lady's promise of doom was still on the presses, she was subpoenaed by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and asked whether she is or ever was a member of the Communist Party. She refused to answer for fear of self-incrimination and was duly suspended by her college. A clearer sample of the real motivations behind the cries of hysteria could hardly be cited. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, one hopes, now realizes that

it has been scientifically hoaxed into advancing Kremlin propaganda.

Thus the myth of an intimidated, lynch-mob America is being peddled by folk who, inferentially, preen themselves as the exceptions to the rule, as the nobly un-intimidated few. It shows up in the strangest dimensions: as an alibi, for instance, for a dearth of good plays on Broadway! The pitch was set by Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times*, in a summary of the 1951 theatrical season. Having shown the sterility of the year, he offered his bizarre explanation: "Ignorant heresy-hunting and bigoted character assassination that have acquired the general title of McCarthyism are succeeding. . . . The hoodlums are in control here as well as in Russia."

The cue was picked up by humorist James Thurber, solemn for once, in a special article in Atkinson's columns. Some of us think that the cold war, the blood-letting in Korea, the frustrations of a victory without peace and other post-war conditions have put a damper on creativeness all over the world. But Thurber knows better, at least so far as American drama is concerned. "The American theatre," he announced, "is lying at death's door largely because of Congressional probes of playwrights." Subsequently Arthur Miller, himself a prolific play-writer despite McCarthy, offered guarded support of the Atkinson-Thurber twaddle. If

only Congress desisted from embarrassing literary stooges of the Kremlin, the theatre would bloom once more!

**I**N THE AGGREGATE the choral cries of hysteria amount to a smear-America campaign, and the fact that smearing America is the top assignment for Communists the world over is scarcely coincidental. Because reluctantly, fumblingly, years too late, we have begun to unmask Stalin's conspirators in our midst, our country is being painted as intolerant, frightened, hysterical, paranoiac. It is not without significance that the most vicious and unprincipled attack along these lines outside the overt Communist press should appear in the house organ of totalitarian liberalism, the *Nation*.

On June 28, 1952, this weekly produced a special 64-page issue wholly devoted to lambasting America. Its editor, Freda Kirchwey, began with a casual announcement — the initiated need no proofs — that we are “forsaking reason for panic and the imbecile acts that panic breeds.” She saw this country “piling up cruel and unjust measures” and pleaded for “restoration of democratic safeguards and procedures,” on the bland assumption that they no longer exist. There followed articles by an array of self-righteous “progressives” — most of them with long records of Communist-front affiliations — detailing

the ravages of that panic in various areas of national life.

Matthew Josephson, for instance, dealt with book publishing in this period of “mass hysteria over internal communist enemies.” His own books and those of all other contributors to the *Nation* smear are printed, acclaimed, and distributed as heretofore; authors blackballed by the liberal coteries continue to be ignored or vilified in the book supplements; but Josephson weeps over the end of liberty in publishing notwithstanding. Out in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, some official burned five or six books on sex and socialism. On the basis of this lonely and untypical incident Josephson proclaimed that “It,” meaning book-burning *à la* Hitler, has happened here. (Stalin, I might remark in passing, doesn't bother to burn books — he burns the authors.)

An unidentified “X” does an equivalent diagnosis of Hollywood, which he claims is “a hopeless push-over for any witch-hunting outfit that seeks to collect blood or blackmail.” What outfits, where and when, how much blackmail? Such minor matters are also “X.”

Professor Kirtley F. Mather, who ranks high in the statistics of academic fellow-traveling, unloads his measure of mud. He sees a “campaign to paralyze all independent thought, discussion and dissent concerning America's foreign policies.” Yes, foreign policies — as if we had

anything *but* dissent on those from all directions in recent years. He is particularly upset because, in his unsupported opinion, scientists are "favorite targets of those who look for potential traitors and subversives behind every bush." Somehow the names of Gold, Fuchs, Pontecorvo, May, and others who have been flushed too late from behind those bushes do not appear in his analysis.

This indictment of America, 64 pages of it, is graced by a paid full-page advertisement on the back cover from the American Civil Liberties Union, which thus gives its imprimatur to the shameless attack. This Praetorian Guard of our Bill of Rights, with top-shelf fellow-travelers like Corliss Lamont on its board, seems to have a professional as well as ideological interest in promoting the hysteria bogey. Witness its fund-raising letter dated September, 1952, signed by the open-mouthed Arthur Garfield Hays.

It begins with a call to crusade "against today's climate of opinion in which suspicion and fear run rampant and independent thinkers are loosely charged with communist sympathies." (These ubiquitous independent thinkers! semantic blood brothers, no doubt, of the once ubiquitous agrarian reformers in China.) Then, in the same paragraph, comes a howler of a *non sequitur*: an appeal to defend two Negroes "illegally convicted of murder." Whatever the facts of the

conviction, murder as an aspect of independent thought sets a record for confusion. It presents at long last convincing evidence of hysteria, if not in America as a whole at least in the segment for which Hays babbles. The Union's annual report for 1949 saw anti-Communist tendencies so "ominous" that "even the United Nations staff has not been immune from unsubstantiated attack in Congress as an alleged center of espionage and subversion." That, in the context of recent events, calls for no comment.

**I**F THE CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, the *Nation* and the rest have made little headway in convincing the American people, they have succeeded magnificently beyond our frontiers. Their thesis fits perfectly into and reinforces the larger anti-American drive abroad.

In Europe recently I was asked in all seriousness by presumably well-informed, or at any rate well-read, people about the hysteria and terror sweeping the United States. It was plain that they took these rhetorical charges quite literally, visualizing mob violence, kangaroo courts, subversives dangling from lamp posts, and "independent thinkers" cowering in cellars. My disclaimer had little effect, I fear.

A British publication called *Books of the Month*, dated October, 1952, presents an article by the librarian of the University of California,

Lawrence Clark Powell, which leads off as follows: "In this time of inquisitional nationalism, I know that I run a risk in confessing that I possess a French doctor's degree and own an English car. And what dire fate do I court when I say that I prefer English books?" I humbly recommend that the University of California undertake a study of how our Inquisition deals with the American owners of foreign cars and doctorates; the Rockefeller Foundation can surely be counted on to finance the project.

Statements like Dr. Powell's are shrugged off as self-evident imbecility here, but they find ready credence in Europe. It is not astonishing, therefore, to find a Professor Alexander McBeath of Queens University, Belfast, Ireland, in a speech on September 1, 1952, asserting as if it were indisputable fact that in the U.S.A. "dissent is regarded as disloyalty, criticism as an unfriendly act, and a difference of opinion as disaffection." Or to find the London *Daily Herald* warning that "hysteria about communism is making a dent in America's claim to call itself a democracy."

The normally sane London *Economist*, reviewing Owen Lattimore's *Ordeal* with naive credulity, says: "It is also an unfortunate fact that nobody who is tried in the United States . . . on any charge which suggests, however remotely, disloyalty can expect at this moment

to have a fair trial." The *Economist* seems unaware that even the Com-magers and the Civil Liberties Union give our courts good marks for fair and square conduct.

Bertrand Russell, on October 30, 1951, informed readers of the Manchester *Guardian* that the U.S.A. today is as much a police state as Russia under Stalin or Germany under Hitler; that "nobody ventures to pass a political remark without first looking behind the door to make sure no one [is] listening. . . . If by some misfortune you were to quote with approval some remark by Jefferson you would probably lose your job and find yourself behind bars."

Lord Russell has the courage of his nonsense. He journeyed to America to collect fees for repeating these grotesqueries to audiences of millions — and without looking behind the door. Mr. Markel was so impressed with the cogency of these charges that he gave the eminent visitor the front page of his Sunday magazine section to repeat them.

Another British liberal, Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, unburdened himself in a letter to the ever hospitable New York *Times*. He declared himself "deeply troubled at what seems to amount to something very like a systematic persecution of independent thought. A liberal is expected to apologize for his doubts about a prevailing orthodoxy; to be left of

center may be to court the risk of public disgrace and loss of office." (That may come as a surprise to some 27 million citizens who voted for a left-of-center Presidential candidate on November 4.) And Graham Greene, immediately upon reaching Hollywood, proclaimed that the movie capital was under "a reign of terror."

That is how hysteria over hysteria snowballs. From the *New York Nation* to the *London Nation* and back again to the *New York Times*. From Markel to Bertrand Russell and back again to Markel. Each assertion seems to reinforce the other until the dissenter is driven to conclude that dissent, at least in this one area, is indeed being suppressed.

THE ONE CONSOLATION, as we face the propaganda portrait of a distraught, hysterical America, is that it implies a nation of heroes. For the unterrified seem roughly equal to our entire population. Heedless of the awful risks, Americans continue to quote Jefferson, express unpopular views, champion minority causes and in general deport themselves as per usual.

It is almost a pity to spoil the picture of universal valor by insisting that the whole tale of terror is a phony. The American people finally have learned some of the facts of life about the Communist conspiracy, espionage, false-fronts, infiltration. More and more of their

earnings are being soaked up by the cold war. Their sons are dying in a hot war with Communists in Korea. Against this background, the country has remained remarkably calm, tolerant and Hamlet-like in its search for remedies within the framework of traditional freedoms. A better case, in fact, could be made out for general apathy than for hysteria.

The Communist Party, officially adjudged a foreign agency, has not been outlawed. Its mass meetings, "peace" movements, and other mischief-mongering have not abated. Organizations formally labeled subversive are doing a brisk business at the old stand. Communist-controlled trade unions still function as accredited bargaining agencies in industries vital to national security.

The best test of a nation's state of nerves is in its administration of justice. That, no doubt, is why distant critics like the *London Economist*, having swallowed the hysteria myth, take it for granted that American justice is a shambles. Yet our courts have been bending backward to give accused Reds the benefit of every legal loophole. Judith Coplon and William Remington, convicted by juries, are at liberty on technicalities. Fully identified traitors are protected by statutes of limitation and hundreds of Communists, on the plea of self-incrimination, find cozy shelter behind the allegedly defunct Bill of

Rights. The Supreme Court has made a number of rulings favorable to the Red-front outfits. The trials of Communist leaders under the Smith Act drag on for many months precisely because of the meticulous observance of the rights of the defendants.

Of the dozens of men and women identified as spies by Chambers, Bentley, Budenz and others, only three or four have been punished. The rest continue to work, teach, agitate and complain of "oppression" unmolested. Clarence F. Hiskey, accused under oath of atomic espionage, and refusing to answer essential questions on grounds of self-incrimination, was for a time rehired by Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. A Congressional pamphlet on Soviet espionage, *The Shameful Years*, swarms with names of Americans — businessmen, lawyers, teachers, writers — who remain free to carry on. Surely the immunity of such people does not jibe with the story of a nation wildly hysterical.

Lattimore has recounted how his own university and scores of eminent admirers elsewhere rallied to his defense. Immediately after his testimony before the McCarran Committee, in which he hedged and crawled and lied, he was invited to address the Academy of Social and Political Science in Philadelphia, even as Alger Hiss addressed a Quaker seminar after his first trial. "On the university campuses," Wil-

liam Henry Chamberlin has attested, "Lattimore is a hero and Senator McCarthy a deep-dyed villain." Try to fit such things into a pattern of public dementia! Suppose that Lattimore had been as intimately and persistently connected with Nazi instead of Communist persons and views, would the embattled civil libertines have been so solicitous about his "martyrdom?"

Those who prate of a "black night of fear" should be asked a few elementary questions. Are they alone without fear that they dare speak so loudly? Is the prodigious outcry against McCarthy really consistent with their assumptions of fear and silence? Was Governor Stevenson afraid to lambaste anti-Communists and make light of Red conspirators as mere "phantoms?" Have officials, from the President down, been too intimidated to yell "red herring" when Communists were pried out of government woodwork? Did Mrs. Roosevelt hesitate to smear Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley, the accusers rather than the accused, before all the evidence was in?

Such questions could be listed for pages. If there was a touch of hysteria following the revelations about spy rings, it was not in the general public, which took the news with strange detachment. It was, rather, in the speed and heat with which the leading liberals rushed to defend

the suspects and castigate those making the disclosures.

If this country were in the knowing mood described by Lord Russell and the Americans who gave him his line, we might expect the shocking findings of the Senate committee with regard to the Institute of Pacific Relations to receive immense space and evoke indignant editorials in the press. But except for routine news stories, the press substantially ignored the great historic report. Nor have the committee's revelations deterred great banks and foundations from continuing to finance the I.P.R. or respectable public figures from lending it the prestige of their names.

The prize exhibit of alleged thought control is the University of California loyalty oath. But the hysteria boys slur over the most telling fact in that episode: the fact that the oath was killed by due process of law. The efficacy of loyalty pledges is open to question. What needs to be noted, however, is that teachers have not only refused to sign but have made their refusal stick.

Considering that some 3,000 professors have in recent years chalked up a total of 26,000 Communist-front affiliations, the dismissal of a handful of them attests long-suffering patience rather than a witch hunt. More than 160 professors publicly sponsored the notorious Waldorf-Astoria "Peace" Confer-

ence, a frankly Soviet show, and 112 sponsored a Bill of Rights Conference addressed by Communist Party leaders. Not one of those educators has lost his job on this account. The American Association of University Professors could hardly have been terrified when it formally approved employment of Communists as teachers several years ago, a policy to which it still adheres.

For a community of the gagged, educators seem to be strangely vociferous in support of Stalinist causes. A study of addiction to Red false-fronts made by Dr. J. B. Matthews shows its incidence to be highest among educators, who make up over 25 percent of those who join Communist-controlled activities and step into Communist booby-traps. Evidently they *are* terror-stricken — that they may be mistaken for conservatives. Professor Ludwig Lewisohn of Brandeis University came close to the realities when he wrote: "The only scholar, the only type of student, who is still forced into a defensive position on American campuses today is the conservative teacher or student, the religious teacher or student."

**T**HERE IS a grim joker in the hysteria over hysteria. It is the attempt to correlate Communist conspiracy with free speech, independent thought, dissenting opinion, academic freedom. That's the

psychological gimmick: to extend these noble values to cover spying, theft of official secrets, plotting, lying under oath, and covert corruption of young minds. This, as Professor Peter Viereck has pointed out, conveniently confuses criminal deeds and the preparation of criminal deeds with civil freedoms.

The essence of the totalitarian liberal demand, stripped of double-talk, is not the Communist's or fellow-traveler's right to speak his views — no one has denied that — but his right to *conceal* and *mislablel* his real views and conspiratorial purposes. In effect Commager, DeVoto and company want to guarantee for subversives and Kremlin agents the privilege of fooling and betraying their fellow-Americans, not as "independent thinkers" but as purveyors of propaganda who have renounced the right of independent thinking. "Their strategy," to quote Viereck again, is to "denounce America's defense against totalitarian *acts* as if they were suppression of *ideas* and hence of freedom."

Undoubtedly many of the fomenters of hysteria over hysteria are truly concerned with freedom. These are the parrots, the dupes, the dopes. Their confusion stems from the premise that Communists "despite everything" are a species of social crusaders.

But so far as the conscious comrades and fellow-travelers are con-

cerned, the goals of their strategy are fairly obvious. In the measure that they succeed, they adroitly transfer the onus from the accused to the accusers. They intimidate those who would expose Stalin's crowd. At the same time they promote the fairy tale, so helpful to their operations, that effective resistance to Red skulduggery is impossible within the limits of the Bill of Rights. Which is nonsense. The Founding Fathers could hardly have intended to leave their republic powerless to hunt out those dedicated to its destruction.

Some years ago the smear-word for too-earnest anti-Communists was "redbaiter." It actually deterred many an American from interfering with the Kremlin rackets. Timorous souls hid or watered down their hatred of Communism for fear of the label.

Today "hysteria" and "McCarthyism" serve the same deterrent purpose, precisely as the manipulators of these specious tags planned it. And again too many enemies of Stalinism with a Milquetoast streak dilute their anti-Communism with pious assurances that *they*, God forbid, are not hysterical or McCarthyite.

The hysteria bogey must be demolished to clear the road to more effective struggle with the Communist menace, which is the central task of this period. The danger today is not hysteria but complacency.

# Sex, Slaughter, & Liberalism

By Joseph Stocker

AT 8:21:38 A.M. on October 11, 1948, the first copy of the first issue of the Los Angeles *Mirror* rolled off the press. The event was attended by that ritual which Los Angeles decrees for the start of all new enterprises, from filling stations to bail bond agencies. Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy and Don Ameche were there. Jimmy Durante dedicated a song; and a stacked-up starlet said the *Mirror* was the paper she "would like most to cuddle up with after a hard day's studio work."

With such a start it is no wonder that the *Mirror* today is successful. Its circulation has soared to 212,000, making it the second largest afternoon paper in the West. It has passed one of its rivals, the *Daily News*, in circulation, and is breath-

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ing down the neck of Hearst's *Herald Express*, traditional top-dog among Western afternoon dailies. What the *News* and the *Express* have lost in circulation almost exactly equals what the *Mirror* has gained; so it would appear that the new tabloid has taken its business right out of its competitors' hides instead of from increased population.

So the *Mirror* is now claiming, with justification, that it is the first new metropolitan newspaper in twenty-five years to get on its feet in America. (The last one was the *Chicago Times*, now the *Sun-Times*.)

The *Mirror's* achievement becomes all the more remarkable when one considers the fantastically competitive character of Los Angeles journalism. Besides the *Mirror's* two afternoon competitors, there are two morning metropolitan papers — Hearst's *Examiner* and the independent *Times*. And scattered around the vast Los Angeles area are a score of