

Times about the Rosenbergs: "I would not take the position that they were completely innocent." At this point a man jumped up in the audience and screamed from the depths, "He never said that! He never said that!" It occurred to me that Sobell, even if he wanted to speak out more plainly about the Rosenbergs now, would feel constrained by the emotional expectations of such partisans as the man who cried out in the audience. Later, during the question period, Sobell did in fact stand up and protest the quotation. Showing great pain and pressure, he insisted he was quoted out of context and that "I made it very clear to him that I was innocent, and that I thought that Julius and Ethel were just as innocent as I was. But he toyed around, asking me hypothetical questions. . . ."

9. Other cries from the audience to Radosh and Milton: "What are you doing with your profits from your book?" "You're an ideologue!" "Nobody on the jury was Jewish!" "No peers!" "You're a filthy liar."

10. A haunting moment came as Joyce Milton was answering a question about the lost console table that the Rosenbergs were alleged to have used

for microfilming and that was later discovered in the home of Julius Rosenberg's sister. A voice out of the past cried out, "Could you tell me what part of the house that was in? In what room was it in Ethel Goldberg's house?" It was the voice of Julius Rosenberg's sister, Ethel Goldberg Appel, a coiffured woman in her late fifties. Joyce Milton continued to speak, now about the sample of uranium David Greenglass was supposed to have stolen from Los Alamos and thrown into the East River. A shaking voice rang out: "Julie never knew about that! Let me explain to you!" People screamed, "Let her talk!" As friends tried to restrain the trembling woman, her voice again pleaded, "*Julius never knew about that!*" In that moment, Julius Rosenberg was more alive and represented in Town Hall than he ever would be by his ideological defenders.

Shortly after the Rosenbergs were executed, a street in an East European country was named after them. Several years later, the street's name was changed.

So, too, will the sophistries of the

Rosenberg defenders change with the immediate needs of the moment, or the pressures of reality—i.e., the Schneirs will no longer only state of Sarant and Barr as they did in the first edition of their book that they were "presumably living abroad." It is true that, as the Rosenberg friends contend, we do not know the whole truth of the case and that more information will continue to filter out from the files and other sources. But the unfolding truth will not be a source of comfort to them, and they will continue to reinvent a truth of their own.

We will gradually learn more about other members of the larger Rosenberg spy ring, including names little known at this point. Rebecca West wrote in *The New Meaning of Treason* of Mr. and Mrs. Morris Cohen, "whom the FBI knew as associates of the Rosenbergs....In 1950, after Harry Gold had been arrested and had led the FBI to Greenglass, the Rosenbergs gave the Cohens the signal to leave." They turned up in London as Peter and Helen Kroger, antiquarian book dealers specializing in sadomasochistic pornography. In 1961 they were convicted as part of the "Naval Secrets" spy ring.

The Schneirs defined much of what Radosh and Milton have uncovered as the "garbage" of the case: including the role of Jerome David Tartakow, the informer in prison to whom Julius Rosenberg bragged about his espionage activities, and the larger spy network of which Sarant and Barr were a part.

The Rosenberg case will remain a pivotal one, for it turns back the clock to a world view that had the remnants of credibility for the Stalinist Left in 1950, before the worst revelations about the Gulag were admitted by the Russians themselves. In this view America was surely turning fascist, and its enemies had to be "anti-fascists." It was very clear. Radosh and Milton's discoveries will continue to be called "garbage," as the Schneirs so delicately put it, and the clean, unsullied part, the view of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg as the pure "progressive" couple working for peace and brotherhood. This view will continue to find its advocates among those who cannot accept a world in which the Left stands for anything but innocence.

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg continue to carry a heavy burden. □

Benjamin J. Stein

THE DERATIONALIZED ZONE

Shine it on, L.A.

At the place where the border between the conscious and the unconscious ends lies Los Angeles. In a kind of weirdly derationalized zone lies the city, the state of mind where there is no clear demarcation between the real and the fantasy, the fact and the imagination. I live in the middle of that miasma and drive its freeways every day. I also travel outside of Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. and New York and Chicago and Sarasota and San Francisco and I observe that throughout this great republic the line between the dream and the awake is disappearing as a

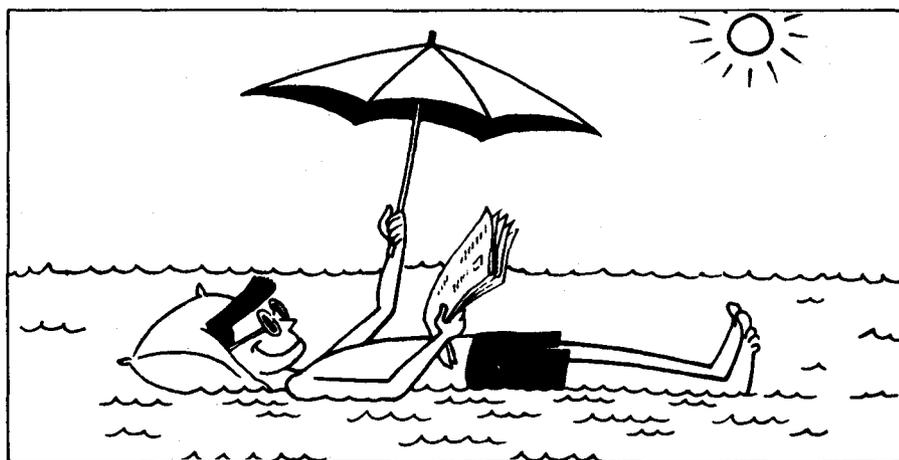
Benjamin J. Stein's latest book is *The Manhattan Gambit* (Doubleday).

national phenomenon. Of course, what with television and movies coming to shape more and more of daily life, and what with movies and

television all coming out of Los Angeles, it was inevitable that the state of mind of Los Angeles would take hold all over the United States,

like an irresistible, grinning body snatcher.

All of the momentum, comrade, is on the side of the city that controls the media, just for starters. There never was much hope that Los Angeles would become like Boston, and Boston never really had much hope of withstanding L.A. There are now four hot-tub dealers on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard. There are no Ivy League colleges in L.A., if you get the picture. The typists at the Department of Health and Human Services wear mini-skirts and white socks. No one in L.A. rides the subway, so you can see just how much the nation's capital means and how much L.A. means.



But what lies in store for the rest of America once it is thoroughly Los Angelesized has only a little bit to do with hot tubs or dressing like a Val. It has a lot more to do with the utter dissociation of a human mind, which

“All that talk about Alabama reminds me of the Cuban Missile Crisis,” Sally said. “Didn’t that happen right near Alabama?”

condition is then taken for granted and treated as normal by the rest of society, which is also undergoing powerful dissociation from reality. While there are still a few Checkpoint Charlies around the nation separating what is awake from what is asleep, I offer a few pointers on what to expect once the merger of the sane and insane is complete.

For example, an item on the KNX radio news recently correcting an earlier story. The earlier story said that Lawrence Bittaker, the convicted “freeway strangler” who had killed at least twenty teenage boys in a homosexual spree in 1980, had married a certain woman named “Mary.” That earlier story said that Bittaker’s bride was a former male cellmate of Bittaker who had fallen in love with Bittaker, had undergone a sex change operation, and was now married although hopelessly separated from Mr. Bittaker. The correction said that Mr. Bittaker’s wife was not that woman, who had married another convict, but a born-again Christian woman who had fallen in love with Bittaker during his trial, while he was recounting details of some of the murders. KNX regretted the error.

For example, on a scale somewhat more manageable than Bittaker’s, I frequently have lunch with a young hustler named Dan. Dan and I met for breakfast at the Hamburger Hamlet last week. After he told me about his plans to get rich quick by producing a series of video tapes about protecting your dog or cat from kidnaping, he leaned forward confidentially. “Do you promise to keep this a secret?” he asked.

“Of course not,” I said.

“I have something that’s truly unbelievable. This one is gonna go,” he said. “This is the big one for me. The only problem is that I’m afraid

I’m dealing with some very tough people.”

“Really,” I said.

“Yes, indeed,” he said. “Some of my friends who deal coke are into something really, really major. Do you have a lab or something where they can test a substance for purity?”

“No,” I said.

“The thing is,” he said, “that I’ve been given a very small quantity of something to see if I can sell it and I have to know if it’s real.”

“I see,” I said.

“You promise to keep this really, really secret?” he asked.

“No,” I said.

“All right,” he said. “I’ll tell you. In my wallet, I have a very small quantity of interferon. You know what that stuff can do?”

“Amazing,” I said.

“See, they’re making it already in Japan in really large quantities and they want to smuggle it into this country, because the FDA won’t let them sell it here. The Japanese already have tons of it because, see, they were bombed once with atom bombs, so they’ve been secretly stockpiling it just in case,” he said. “For their national leaders, see.”

“I see,” I said.

“Now, they have so much they don’t know what to do with it, so some very heavy hitters in the drug business came to me because they know I can move merchandise very quickly,” Dan said, thrusting forward his chest in his thin leather jacket. Dan is in the children’s shoe business and I guess he moves a lot of shoes. “So I have some, and I told them I’d test it to make sure it’s real and if it’s real, I’d take a few million worth from them.”

“Now I get it,” I said.

“Listen,” he said, leaning forward, “you want some? I have some in my wallet. You can just put some under your tongue in the men’s room. It makes you really, really high.”

“Gosh, no thanks,” I said.

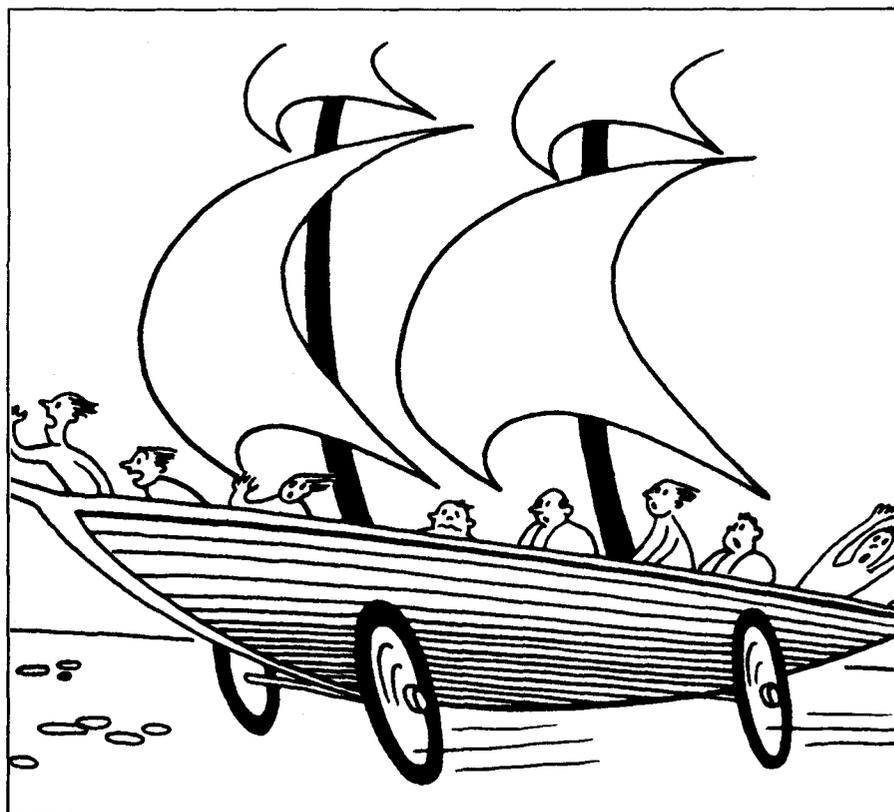
Dan leaned back in his chair and said, “It’s all right. But if you meet anyone who wants to buy some interferon, you know where to tell ’em to look, right?” Dan asked.

“Right,” I said.

For example, a meeting with two young studio executives on the west side of town in an all gray, fabric-walled, high-tech office with clocks showing the time in Djakarta and Tunis as well as New York and Hawaii and L.A., in which both studio executives toyed with their car keys while I spoke. One man had a Porsche key. The other had a Ferrari key. Both men lit cigars and then offered me one as I got ready for my pitch.

“It’s a dark tale of revenge and sexual obsession,” I said. “It takes place in a small town in Alabama where, sixty years ago, an innocent black man was lynched for looking lustfully at a white woman. Now, the black man’s grandson, a totally hip, with-it Vietnam vet is back to take revenge on the whole town. He begins by locking up the leading white family in a house and lynching the men slowly while their wives watch.”

“Great, great,” said one of the studio executives. He interrupted the pitch to tell me that he had been to Alabama and that it was really amazing there.



“How so?” I asked.

“Just really amazing,” he said. “Go on with your pitch,” he added with an airy wave of the hand.

“Well,” I said, “totally unexpectedly, the wife of one of the white victims suddenly starts to feel uncontrollable sexual longings for this black man while her husband is actually being prepared for murder.”

Before I could go on, the studio exec with the Ferrari key said, “I love it. It’s sort of about the problem of the disappearing family, right?”

“Thank you,” I said. “I think so.”

“Let me ask you this,” said the man with the Ferrari key. “How would you feel about making this into an all-out farce comedy?”

“Well,” I said, “in the sense that it involves a certain amount of reversal of roles of power and of

“Here’s the plan. It’s for a stud service for suburban housewives, like up in Thousand Oaks where I live.”

strength perhaps it involves some inherent humor already, but I don’t really see a dark tale of sexual obsession and murder as a comedy.”

The production executive pocketed his keys and stroked his beard and said, “Right, right, I just wanted to raise the issue.”

We talked for a few minutes more about the bloody climax in which the Alabama state troopers surround the house and the wife decides to stay in the house and die with the black man and then I got up to leave.

“Now just let me get something straight,” the production executive with the Ferrari key said as I headed for the door. “We’re talking very now, very stylized Neil Simon comedy here, right?”

“Right,” I said and walked out into the rain.

That evening, I told the story to my friends Al and Sally. Al is one of the most successful sitcom producers in history (something like one of the most famous carwash owners in history, as he likes to say) and Sally has a key ring that says, “I live for revenge.”

“All that talk about Alabama reminds me of the Cuban Missile Crisis,” Sally said. “Didn’t that happen right near Alabama?”

“Practically next door,” I said.

“Remember we all thought we were going to die,” Sally said wistfully. “Remember that?”

“I certainly do,” Al said. “You bet

me a Polaroid camera; we were all going to die. That was when they were really expensive, too."

"Did you ever pay off?" I asked.

"I certainly did," Al said. "Sally used it for ten years and was very happy with it."

"That's right," Sally said. She turned to me and said, "So you are going to do it as a comedy?"

"Of course," I said.

For example, two weeks ago, I took my dogs, Martha and Trixie, for a walk on a rainy Sunday morning. As I turned a corner, past a man working on his BMW in front of a \$300,000 house, a man stood holding a black and white kitten in his hand. The man was tall and thin in an airline pilot's kind of way, which is right for once because he is an airline pilot. "Is that a new kitten?" I asked as the dogs strained at their leashes.

"Not really," he said. "I like to think that all of them are the same."

"I see," I said.

"The first two got sick and died," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper as he said "died." "But I can't deal with illness. I just can't face it at all. So I pretty much act as if it didn't happen. I just get another kitten and call her Lucille just like the others. That way I don't have to face sickness, which is something I really cannot tolerate anyway."

"Fine," I said and walked on. After about fifty feet, I came upon a pale, beautiful young woman standing in the rain with her blond hair over her face, streams of water running off each blond curl, as if the



hair had tear ducts of its own. She wore only a dirty tennis dress and was shivering. I had seen her walking her boyfriend's dog, a horribly ill-kept shepherd, on earlier days.

"Traci," I said. "Traci, what's wrong?"

Through her tears she told me that she had been beaten up by her boyfriend, a rock songwriter and musician. She had nowhere to go, thirty cents in her pocketbook, and was completely alone in Los Angeles. I brought her back to the house, where I offered her tea. "Do you have herbal?" she asked.

She told me she had been awakened at two a.m. by her boyfriend's beating her. Then she had watched

"Female mud wrestling," she said. "I've done it. It was one of my first jobs. It was really an amazing insight into modern life."

horrified as he had thrown her clothes in the fireplace and burned them. She told me that her father was dead and that her mother lived with her stepfather in San Antonio. They were the only friends or family she had "on earth." I told her to take a nap in my wife's dressing room. She woke up several hours later and said that she had better try to hitchhike back to San Antonio.

"No," I said. "That's too pathetic. I'll give you the money for air fare and you can go tonight."

"Well," she said, "can I wait until tomorrow? If I'm going back, I'd like to go to Sassoon and get my hair done before I go."

For example, the beautiful blonde woman who works as a receptionist at my former agency: She sits behind a desk, looking like a marble goddess of femininity and allure, with her dark blue eyes and her hair pulled straight back.

"I read your book," she told me one recent morning.

"You did?" I asked. "Which one?"

She looked stumped and waved her hand airily. "The new one," she said. "I loved it. It was really funny."

The new one was about a close friend who had died from addiction to Quaaludes, but I shined it on.

"You are a really great writer. Did you know that?" she asked. "Really great."

"Thank you," I said.

"People at this agency consider you a major talent," she added.

"I'm so grateful," I said.

"I wonder if you could take me out

to dinner some night," she asked. "I want to talk to you about writing something very important. Very, very important," she added after a pause.

"Really?" I asked.

"Just let me say this," she said. "It's important enough that it could be a TV movie of the week."

"That important," I said. "Can you tell me what it might be about?"

"Only if it's a secret," she said. "You promise to keep it a secret?"

"No," I said. "I don't think so."

"Well, I'll tell you anyway, but it's really important," she said. "I think you'll be pretty surprised. It's about something very private, very personal that I've been involved with myself. Very private and very per-

sonal," she said, stroking her blond hair with her Volkswagen key.

"Yes?" I said, leaning forward expectantly.

"Female mud wrestling," she said. "I've done it. It was one of my first jobs. It was really an amazing insight into modern life. I think a serious writer like you is the only person who could do it justice."

"I think it may be too serious for me," I said. "Have you thought about Joan Didion? She may be more into serious subjects than I am. I think she's interested in an M.O.W. about mud wrestling. At least that's the word I hear."

"Joan Didion," said the blonde receptionist. "How do you spell that?"

For example, a meeting with a major power at a network concerning a true life story which had happened out there in the world. The executive, a man of forty years' experience in movies and TV, toyed with a green-bronze pre-Columbian dagger while I talked to him.

"The story is that a few years ago, there was a beautiful teenage girl in Russia who was the daughter of a top Red Army General. She needed tutoring in mathematics, so Dad hired a Jew, a young guy who was a whiz in math, to tutor her. They fell in love, see, and the General was very angry. He had the young man sent to prison, to the Gulag, then to a military prison, and still his daughter loved him. Finally, the General tried a trick. He let the young man out, then he told his daughter they could be married and emigrate. But he told

her he would let the young man out first and then a year later, she could leave. So they got married and she had a baby almost immediately. Off he went to America, to teach at Georgetown University. Then the father, the General, told her she couldn't leave and the marriage was invalid and when she protested he put her in a mental hospital," I said, all in one breath.

"Wow," said the executive. "Where was this?"

"In Russia," I said.

"So then," I continued, "the daughter went on a hunger strike and was just about dead when the father's heart melted and he told his daughter he would try to get her out. So he went to his bosses and they told him that his daughter could leave only if the General resigned all his posts, quit the army, and lived in internal exile for the rest of his life."

"Wow," the executive said. "Where do you get these stories?"

"Well," I said, "this one was in the papers, but wait until the end."

"There's more?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "The General agreed to resign everything and live in disgrace for the rest of his life and his daughter left and now lives in Washington, D.C. with her husband and daughter."

"Fantastic," he said, "where did you say this happened?"

"In Russia," I said. "Just this month the wife came to Washington."

"All right," the executive said with a heavy sigh. "First of all, you have to understand that I love it. Really love it."

"I understand," I said.

"But there are two big problems with it. First, the nets are really scared of anything that seems to be too politically one-sided. So is there any way we could work this around so that it didn't look as if we were coming down too hard just on the Russians?"

He played with a golf ball with a Mercedes emblem on it and then said, "Maybe we could set it up as a kind of 'plague on both your houses' situation with us and the Russians equally to blame."

"That's going to be a tough one," I said, "since the U.S. wasn't really involved until the very end."

"All right," he said. "That leads to the next problem which is that we don't like to do anything that doesn't have an American lead and isn't set in America. Is there any way the story could be changed around so that it's an American general and it's set, say, in Texas?"

"I wish I'd thought of that," I said.

"Give it more thought and come back to me on it," he said.

For example, Marie Richardson, the mother of a young woman who works for me. Last week she called to ask me if I could do her "a humongous favor." She is 45 years old and an overpowering large bosomed blonde who lives in a suburb far out in the Conejo Valley, which makes the San Fernando Valley look like Park Avenue in the sixties for sophistication.

"What's the favor?" I asked.

"I want to start a business," she said, "and I know you have a lot of connections on Wall Street and maybe you could help me get financing. It's a unique kind of project."

"Well, tell me about it," I said, "although most of the people I know on Wall Street are only interested in lending money to Yugoslavia."

"Here's the plan. It's for a stud service for suburban housewives, like up in Thousand Oaks where I live. What we'd do is get a lot of high-school football players and sign them up to take care of the housewives in the afternoons," she said. "I'd get a percentage of the take."

"Good idea, Marie," I said.

"Plus, maybe I could franchise the whole operation. There's no reason at all why it couldn't work all over the country, is there?"

"None that I know of, Marie," I said.

"Do you think any of your friends on Wall Street would be interested in putting up some seed money for the plan?" she asked.

"Listen," I said. "Have you ever heard of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company?"

For example, a recent speech I gave at a local university which is set on a pleasing knoll overlooking the Pacific Ocean. My speech was about writing novels based on political events. The students had apparently had a rough night and were generally either filing their nails or reading *Car and Driver*. To stimulate discussion, the teacher asked me if I had considered writing a novel about the first woman President.

"I hadn't thought of that," I said.

"I've often thought about it," said the teacher, a refined woman with a giant gold necklace that read "Let's Play In My Porsche." She added, "The only problem is that I can't think of a plot."

"Well, that is a problem," I said.

"See, I figure that she's a secretary and she gets to be a congresswoman by sleeping with a lot of guys and then she gets to be a senator by sleeping with the right guys, and then finally she gets to be President

by sleeping with a lot of guys, but I can't really figure out any more than that and that's just like, well, almost a documentary and it doesn't have much jeopardy," the English Lit. teacher said.

The students still had not looked up. "Maybe you could have her get assassinated," I suggested. "While she's sleeping with some really important guy."

A student raised her hand. "Do we have to take notes on this?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed," the teacher said. "This kind of thing will come in very handy in your political science classes, too."

For example, my friend Dan called last night to tell me that he had still not sold his interferon. "It's the damn recession, man," he added. "But I think maybe I can sell a movie about it. You want to help?"

"Gosh, I'm sorry," I said. "I'm so busy I can't think straight."

"The thing is," he said, "that I'm getting a little tired of the shoe business and the company I sell for has made me a very attractive offer to act as an independent shoe middleman (which reminded me of what a great offer England, Austria, and Russia made to Napoleon, setting him up as an independent emperor on St. Helena). That means I'll have a lot of free time to work on making the interferon story into a movie. I plan for that to be my next movie."

"What was your last movie?" I asked.

"It's still in my mind," he said. "I'm still thinking about it. The one about interferon will be my next movie. I have a really full production schedule."

For example, a certain real estate saleswoman I know. She drives a 1965 Volkswagen beetle, battered almost beyond recognition, with the personalized license plate "HAD NOT." The woman lives in what might be called "straitened" circumstances in a small cottage in West L.A. As far as I can tell, the woman has always lived in straitened circumstances.

"What's that license plate all about?" I asked her not long ago, over the telephone.

"That's for when I'm rich," she said. "That's to put on my Rolls convertible."

"How long have you had it?" I asked.

"Oh, for about ten years," she said. "It's to show that I was once a 'have not' person, sort of like a 'have

not' nation like we learned about in school, but that now I have it all."

"But you don't have it yet," I said. "Are you getting any closer?"

"Not really," she said. "Not really at all, but I just want to be prepared for when I do. You see," she said, "that's part of the way I live my life. It's a religion called psychocyber-

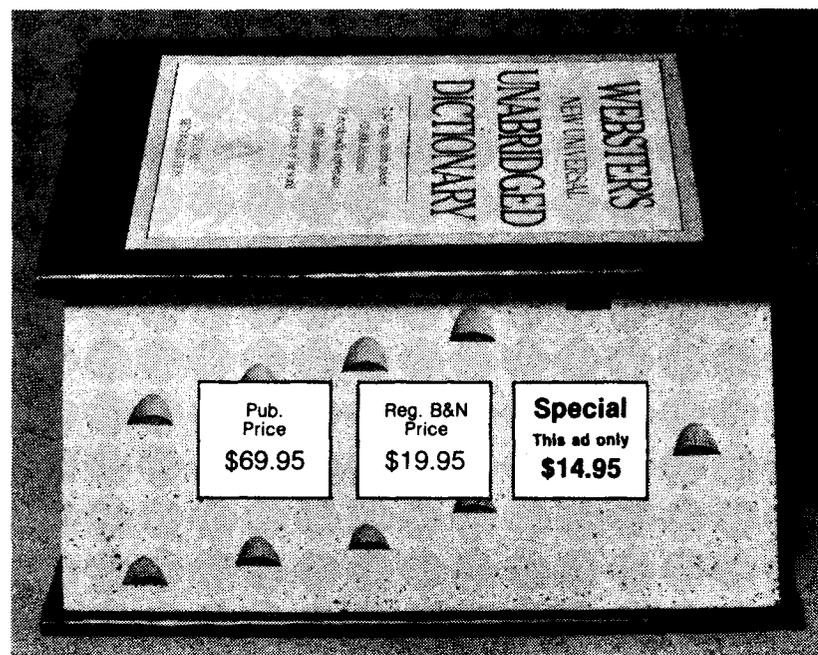
netics. It tells you to just put your mind where you want to be and you'll get there."

"Does it have a schedule?" I asked.

"That's your problem," she said with a sigh. "You're so literal."

She said that and then I hung up. □

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Stephen Miller

SIDNEY HOOK: FIFTY YEARS OF ANTI-COMMUNISM

Can the essays of a Cold Warrior be worth much?
Or should one stick with Edmund Wilson?

There are no second acts in American lives, F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, by which he meant that American writers usually fizzle out. Unable to sustain a full career, their writing takes a turn for the worse as they advance into old age. But Fitzgerald did not live long enough to see some of his contemporaries put on, as it were, five-act plays: Wallace Stevens and Elizabeth Bishop, for example, as well as Edmund Wilson, one of Fitzgerald's friends. Wilson did some of his best work—*Patriotic Gore*—when he was past sixty. Then there is Sidney Hook—like Wilson a major American essayist. Though past eighty, Hook is still writing well, as can be seen in *Marxism and Beyond*,* a collection of his essays from the last ten years.

To call Hook a major American essayist may come as a surprise. We tend to think of essayists as free-floating souls who, like Wilson, deal mainly if not exclusively with literary matters. Hook has been a scholar—a professor of philosophy who has spent much of his life expounding the ideas of Marx and Dewey—so how can we call him an essayist, let alone a major one? But Hook, of course, has written innumerable essays on many of the major social and political questions of our time. Though Hook's scholarship is excellent, he always has been most effective, as Irving Kristol has observed, in bringing "his extraordinary intellectual powers to bear on particular issues of social or political controversy. . . ."[†]

*Rowman & Littlefield, \$22.95.

[†]Kristol's essay on Hook appears in *Sidney Hook: Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism*, a festschrift edited by Paul Kurtz, Prometheus Books, \$18.95.

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Hook has been so noted for his stands on certain questions that both his admirers and detractors tend to focus on his position, overlooking the style and argument of his essays. Like Wilson, Hook is a master of the plain style; he never labors to be clever, never parades his learning. His prose is clear, and rarely humdrum. At times it is eloquent, even Churchillian:

It is better to be a live jackal than a dead lion—for jackals, not men. Men who have the moral courage to fight intelligently for freedom have the best prospect of avoiding the fate of both live jackals and dead lions. Survival is not the be-all and end-all of a life worthy of man. Sometimes the worst thing we can know about a man is that he has survived.

Finally, Hook's essays are intellectually rigorous; he is adept at making distinctions that clarify knotty political questions.

Hook does not lack admirers, some of whom honored him at a dinner in

New York one year ago in celebration of his eightieth birthday. Yet clearly he does not possess the stature of Edmund Wilson, who has been described as the foremost American man of letters of the twentieth century. When the *Portable Edmund Wilson* was published recently, it was lauded in a front-page review in the *New York Times Book Review*. Hook's *Marxism and Beyond*, by contrast, was accorded a few paragraphs in the back pages of the same journal—the reviewer praising Hook for his scholarly analyses of Marxist thought yet chiding him for his anti-Communism.

The difference in treatment is appropriate, many would claim, because Wilson is a more interesting essayist. Wilson covered a lot of territory; he wrote about the Civil War, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Iroquois Indians, Russian literature, even the Hungarian language. Hook has generally confined

himself to politics, and on occasion to education. But what has hurt his reputation as an essayist most is his strong anti-Communism. In *The Truants*, a memoir of life among the New York intellectuals, William Barrett writes that Hook was regarded by the editors of the *Partisan Review* as "a kind of Johnny One-Note, clear and forceful but also monotonous in the one issue he was always pursuing."

Hook was also regarded as a brilliant man who had lost his balance—and perhaps, as Irving Howe suggested, his soul. There was something missing in Hook, Howe says in *A Margin of Hope*, "some imaginative flair or depth of sensibility that might complement his intellectual virtuosity. Within that first-rate mind, there had formed a deposit of sterility, like rust on a beautiful machine." True, Hook was not interested in—or at least did not write about—literature, but what bothered Howe and others was Hook's insistence in looking at hard questions: what to do about Americans who were members of the Communist Party, how to deal with Soviet expansionism, what to make of affirmative action. Because he kept on bringing these up, Hook was considered a killjoy. And so even a friend—for Howe was his friend—could sink to purple prose to describe Hook's alleged failings.

There was no rust on Wilson's beautiful machine. His view of the world was balanced: he was an anti-anti-Communist, someone who acknowledged the evil of the Soviet Union but dismissed anti-Communism as simplistic. Yet if Wilson's views were intellectually fashionable, it was not because he bowed to fashion. Wilson truckled to no one. Like Hook, he was inclined to be contentious, to relish literary and political quarrels, to speak bluntly about matters. Temperamentally, Hook and Wilson had much in common. Moreover, until the post-World War II era, their political

