

friend advises him: "You have only to see that your sentences shall come out plain, in expressive, sober and well-ordered language, harmonious and gay, expressing your purpose to the best of your ability, and setting out your ideas without intricacies and obscurities." Greene might be said to have followed this excellent advice as he demonstrates once more why V.S. Pritchett has called him "the most ingenious, inventive and exciting of our novelists." Here the ingeniousness in combination with the well-ordered language centers on the relation between faith and doubt, between reality and fiction, and inevitably on the problem of windmills. "It was only by tilting at windmills that Don Quixote found the truth on his deathbed," the Italian bishop says after he has given Father Quixote his commission to go forth on the high roads of the world.

The wittily managed argument between Christian and Marxist is itself a contention between antagonists, each of whom believes the other a tilter at windmills. The Mayor with his certainties has the best of it to begin with, but the advantage gradually shifts to the Monsignor, the turning point being perhaps the night in the bawdy-house, during which, while the Mayor is tilting against the windmill of sex, the Monsignor tilts against Marx and comes out a winner (but not before he has mistaken a condom for a toy balloon). Everywhere, of course, the fine comedy of the story depends on misinterpretation of information, nowhere more significantly than in the suspicions of the Monsignor's bishop and his replacement, Father Herrera: the Monsignor is a windmill they mistake for a giant against whom they tilt in vain.

The Italian bishop's position is central: if you want the truth you must be willing to run the risk of the windmills. The Monsignor's bishop, Father Herrera, and for a long time the Mayor, do not in their own minds run this risk (though in fact they are vigorous tilters) because they have no doubt. But as the Monsignor tells the Mayor, "No doubt. No faith." How is it, he wonders, sounding as if *he* is the one who has gone to school to Unamuno, "that when I speak of belief, I become aware always of a shadow of disbelief haunting my belief?" Later he confesses, "I am riddled by doubts...but doubt is not treachery, as you Communists seem to think. Doubt is human."

Because he is riddled by doubts Monsignor Quixote sometimes envies those who, like his bishop and the moral theologian Father Jone, "were able to lay down clear rules." Such people, of course, tend to place little value on fiction. The bishop disdains not only Cervantes's novel but novels in general. That we may all be fictions in the mind of God, as the Italian bishop suggests, or that fact and fiction are difficult to distinguish, as the Trappist Father Leopoldo says at the end, would be heretical nonsense to him. He does not belong in the congregation at that high point in the story when the dying Monsignor, in saying his apparently imaginary Mass, closes the gap between the fictive and the real.

And where in the end does this leave the Communist Mayor, who, as Father Leopoldo tells him, received the Host at that Mass, at least in the mind of the celebrant? He prefers, even needs, to believe that there was no Host, for to have doubts about

that, he thinks, "is to lose the freedom of action." A real Host means mystery and, as he tells the Trappist, "I prefer Marx to mystery." But he has learned to love the Monsignor, and the legacy of that love is what we may take to be a state of doubt sufficiently healthy to merit the approval of his old teacher, Unamuno.

As for the author, he can expect to be irritated once more by those readers who, as he puts it in *Ways of Escape*, confuse "the functions of a

novelist and the functions of a moral teacher or theologian." The irritation is understandable, but so is the confusion if you believe that really good fiction cannot help being, in the late John Gardner's sense of the term, moral fiction. *Monsignor Quixote* is morally very earnest indeed about the priority that must be given to a fideistic approach to truth. What else would one expect when its author himself professes to be a dweller in the tragicomic region of La Mancha? □

WHEN THE GOING WAS GOOD! AMERICAN LIFE IN THE FIFTIES

Jeffrey Hart / Crown Publishers / \$15.95

Karl O'Lessker

There may be no stronger testimony to the influence of liberal "communicators" than the present dismal reputation of the 1950s. That was preeminently the decade—as everyone knows—of blind conformity and savage McCarthyism: dull yet scary; stagnant yet teetering on the brink of fascism; redeemed if at all only by the rebels with or without a cause. By any measure a very ugly scene.

At the time this review appears in print I shall be teetering on the brink of my 54th birthday, which means

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that my legal adulthood arrived almost exactly with the advent of the fifties. So it is a decade I remember well and am in a fair position to evaluate. And like Jeffrey Hart, the author of this engaging new book on "American Life in the Fifties" (that is its subtitle), I saw and remember it as vastly different from what its present reputation would indicate.

What makes this conjunction of views more noteworthy than it might at first appear is that while Mr. Hart was a committed conservative even then, I was a fully accredited left-liberal (or as the late great Northwestern University professor William Montgomery McGovern used to call me in those days, an "Eastern pinko internationalist"). By all rights, then, I should have experienced the decade as it is currently portrayed by people who now hold views I have long since abandoned.

But I didn't. On the contrary, I thought it was a wonderfully exciting era, not only for me personally but for culture and politics as well. One of the many virtues of Mr. Hart's book is that he shows why it was so and why intelligent people of diverse cultural and political interests should have found it to be so.

Recall some of the people who flourished in the fifties: in painting and art criticism, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Rauschenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, Hilton Kramer; in writing, J.D. Salinger, James

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Jones, Herman Wouk, Vladimir Nabokov, James Gould Cozzens, Saul Bellow, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Lionel Trilling; in jazz, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, Art Tatum, Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton, Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck, the Modern Jazz Quartet.

Dull? Conformist? The fifties were bursting with creativity (for better or worse) in just about every field of popular and highbrow culture. So the indictment must rest on other grounds. Would anyone care to guess . . . politics?

Well of course that was the Eisenhower decade and everyone "knows" what a dull, mean-spirited old stick he was: Hoover with a grin. It wasn't only his golfing with all those corporation types, it was the people he had around him: Secretary of State Dulles, for example, and *Vice President Nixon!* And twice the American people in their mindlessness chose him over the premier egghead of our time, Adlai Stevenson. Little wonder that the liberal intelligentsia regarded Eisenhower with a loathing that stopped just short of horror. Little wonder they have stigmatized the entire decade as hopeless.

Mr. Hart will have none of that. Quite apart from his own admiration, then as now, for Eisenhower, he succeeds in making an unassailable case for the cultural and intellectual vitality of the fifties. Not only does he write thoughtfully about all those (except the jazzmen) whose names I mentioned earlier; he includes in the discussion major figures from the worlds of sport and pop music as well. It is an impressive list, and an impressive performance on the author's part.

But for all its many virtues, this is in some respects a flawed and self-indulgent book. The faults start with the title. I confess to being baffled by Hart's use of the exclamation point in *When the Going Was Good!* It reminds me of nothing so much as those unsuccessful Broadway musicals (e.g., *Fiorello!*) which try to compensate for lack of excitement on the stage by punctuational enthusiasm in the title.

And there are occasional errors of fact or usage that stir doubts in the sympathetic reader's mind. In correct baseball parlance, for example, a pitcher is most certainly not "in the catbird seat" when the count on a batter is 2 and 0 but rather when it is 0 and 2. Far better that one who presumes to write about baseball split every infinitive in sight and leave modifiers dangling from every

sentence than that he commit that sort of error.

More importantly, I am at a loss to understand what Mr. Hart's speech-writing activities on behalf of Ronald Reagan in the late sixties and Richard Nixon in the late sixties and early seventies have to do with a book about life in the fifties. His own explanation for including them consists of one sentence: "An understanding of the politics of the fifties requires that we put them within a time frame of what came before and what went after."

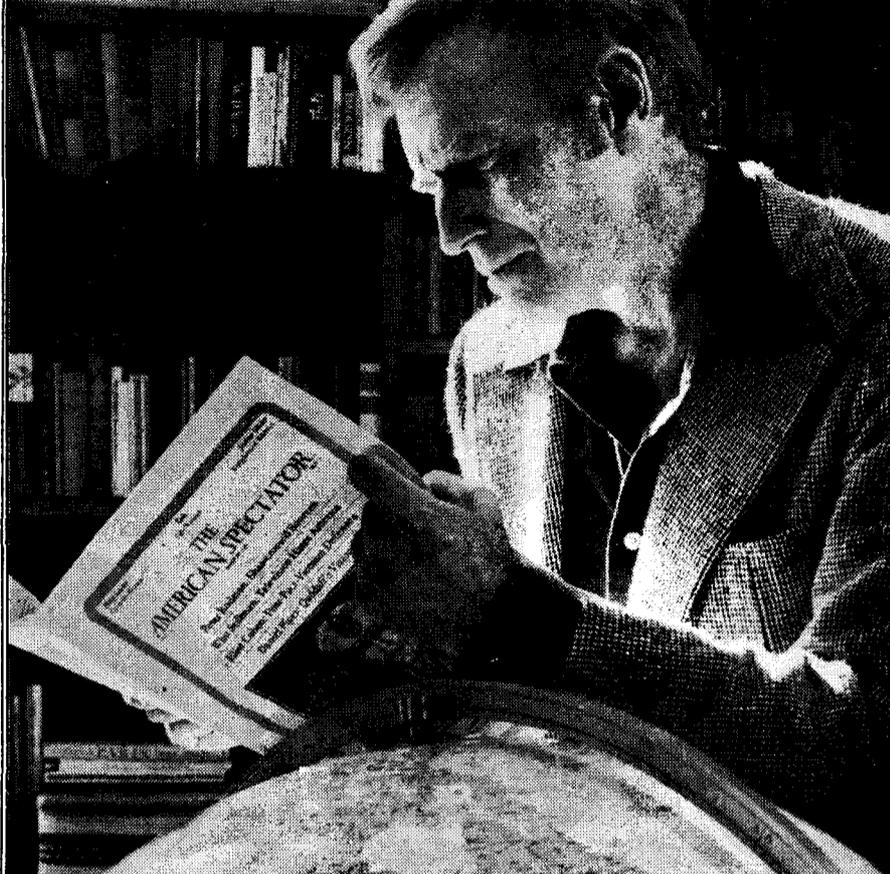
That simply won't do. By no stretch of historical logic does a handful of anecdotes from the late sixties and beyond help us to an "understanding of the politics of the Fifties." Interesting as they are in their own right, in the context of this book they are nothing more than a self-indulgence.

Most importantly, I find it incomprehensible that one would write an entire book about American life in the fifties and not even mention the great civil rights revolution that began in that decade. From the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision in 1954 through the lunch counter sit-ins, Eisenhower's sending of troops to Little Rock in 1957 and the Civil Rights Act of that same year, the fifties were incontestably the most important period in civil rights since Reconstruction. And it is at least arguable (I would myself put it much higher than that) that, in terms of social history, which is after all what the book professes to be, the civil rights revolution has had the most dramatic impact on American life of anything that occurred in the post-World War II era.

But Hart hasn't a word to say about it, save for a couple of pages about Jackie Robinson in the chapter on baseball. His explanation for this extraordinary omission, vouchsafed in an interview I read somewhere, is that the civil rights revolution *really* occurred during the war, thus needed no discussion in a book on the fifties. This is so preposterous an assertion, and Hart so intelligent a man, that I can only conclude he just didn't want to be bothered with the subject and came up with this as a post facto excuse.

Those failings to the side, the book is full of pleasures and rewards. Hart makes particularly effective use of a literary device I normally dislike—mini-chapters interpolated into the text at odd moments. Called here "The Camera Eye," they include sketches or snapshots of, among others, Frank Sinatra at the White House, Nixon recounting an anecdote about the late Senator Estes Kefau-

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ALSO: Ronald Reagan, Malcolm Muggeridge, Ben Wattenberg, Peregrine Worsthorne, S.I. Hayakawa, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Henry Kissinger, Clayton Fritchey, Milton Friedman, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Midge Decter, James Q. Wilson, David Brinkley, Woody Allen, Joseph Coors, Irving Kristol, Henry Fairlie, Alan Abelson, Charlton Heston, Senator Jake Garn, Gertrude Himmelfarb, James Hitchcock, Gen. Alexander Haig, Tom Wolfe, James Jackson Kilpatrick, George Gilder, Jack Paar, Donald H. Rumsfeld, George Will, J. Peter Grace, Maj. Gen. George S. Patton, III, Fred Iklé, Philip Crane, George W. Ball, Tom Stoppard, William F. Buckley, Jr., Patrick Buchanan, Albert Shanker, Lewis Lapham, Rowland Evans, Robert Novak, Jude Wanniski, Jack Kemp, William Rusher, Richard M. Nixon, William E. Simon, Malcolm S. Forbes, Jr., Thomas J. Lescher, Norman Mailer, Raffy Chengrian, Gerald R. Ford, Melvin Lasky, Nelson Polsby, Roger Milliken, Randolph Richardson, Thomas Sowell, Sidney Hook, Jim Fallows, Edith Efron, Gen. A.C. Wedemeyer, James L. Buckley, Elliott Abrams, Lewis Lehrman, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Shmuel Moyal, Huntington Cairns, Eric Hoffer, Anne Armstrong, Norman Podhoretz, Jeff MacNelly, Doris Grumbach, Ernest van den Haag, Paul McCracken, Brock Yates, Ray Price, James Wechsler, James Glassman, John Roche, John Chamberlain, William Safire, Neal Kezodoy, Henry Salvatori, David Meiselman, Martin Peretz, Charles Horner, Edward Banfield, Victor Lasky, Raymond Aron, Roy Cohn, Joseph Hazan, Eugene V. Rostow, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, Hugh Kenner, Frank Shakespeare, William Proxmire, Patrick Cosgrave, Jean-François Revel, Luigi Barzini, Tom Charles Huston, Clay La Force, Fred Silverman, John Lofton, Larry Flynt, M. Stanton Evans, Dana Andrews, Richard Whalen, Richard Lugar, Henry Regnery, Charles Peters, John Lukacs, Leonard Garment, Michael Kinsley, Tom Winter, Nathan Glazer, Alan Reynolds, Antonio Martino, Colin Welch, Robert Bleiberg, Herb Stein, Roger Starr, Walter Goodman, Harry Jaffa, Jeffrey Hart, David Packard, Robert Nisbet, James R. Schlesinger, Thomas Murphy, Suzanne Garment, Roger Rosenblatt, Anthony Harrigan, Robert L. Bartley, David Stockman, Richard Allen, Ernest Lefever, Sen. Paul Laxalt, Joseph A. Califano, Garry Trudeau, David E. Davis, P.J. O'Rourke, William M.H. Hammett, Adin K. Woodward, Robert Lekachman, Leo Rosten, Arthur Laffer, Jerome F. Donovan, Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., Steve Tesich, and many others.

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ver, Paul Fussell reflecting on the Hiroshima bomb, William Buckley debating James Wechsler. Each is lively and entertaining and together they add valuable texture to the book.

In sum, Professor Hart has written a graceful tribute to the fifties, a decade that has been ill-used and badly misunderstood by ideologues

and ignoramuses. If in the end the book is no more than that, if it fails to rise above the level of an eloquent toast to a bygone and better day, it is at the very least great fun to read. And because it will have to be taken into account by more ambitious social historians yet to come, it may turn out to be influential as well. □

COURIER FROM WARSAW

Jan Nowak / Wayne State University Press / \$24.95

Roger Kaplan

There are those who claim that World War II never ended; or that it blended right into World War III, with the West choosing, for better or for worse, an essentially defensive strategy. These are geopolitical semantics: we are at war, deny it as we may try to; our side—Israel, to take a recent example—wins one, we try very hard to reverse the gain, all the while apologizing profusely for our ally's immaturity and thereby inviting the continuation of international disorder. Or our side loses one—South Vietnam, let us not forget it—we do our best to explain it was all a mistake to begin with and let's make up and be friends now, only it turns out the other side is busy even as we say it proving that what we are now calling a mistake was an all-too-accurate analysis of the . . . historical situation.

There are those who believe all this ineptitude, this willful blindness, these self-inflicted handicaps, this knee-jerk goo-gooism in international affairs is all due to a sinister concoction of forces gathered for the most part in the elite clubs of the Eastern seaboard: foolish politicians and recklessly irresponsible journalists combining in morbid shortsightedness with pusillanimous mediocrities in the civil service, backed up and confused at the same time by a bored and hopelessly alienated intelligentsia, proving that when the Founders wrote of the "common defense" they knew not what some day the nation would get.

I do not believe it. There is nothing going on that Henry Adams had not

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already noticed in the manner our political class behaves, there is nothing wrong with our intellectuals that James Burnham and Whittaker Chambers had not already diagnosed, and our foreign policy is largely as Tocqueville said it would be; for all that, at any rate, we are doing pretty well. It is probably a mistake to say that "something happened" around "1968" or "the-latesixties" as it is now pronounced, that wrecked the national will to make this the American Century. For the will was probably never there, and the correct American foreign policy—correct in the sense of being in tune with what the nation is willing to commit itself to abroad—is a splendid isolation combined with a willingness to pursue and destroy international pirates without recourse to any more entangling alliances than are necessary to the task at hand.

This has nothing or very little to do with the recent appearance of an enormously significant book, Jan Nowak's *Courier From Warsaw*. Or perhaps it has a lot to do with it. For what, to us Americans, is Poland? Hamtramck and Stanislawowo, if you are from Detroit or Chicago. A land under the Communist fist. A doomed, perpetually heroic nation, in the plain lying tragically between Teuton and Rus.

For Poland, World War II never ended. This is not a question of semantics at all. Poland was the hot center, the kernel and the acorn, of resistance against the brown plague; hardly missing a beat, it stepped to the front of the resistance against the red one. We rather vaguely speak of a region called Eastern Europe, but Poles have been dying since 1939 for

what is left, alas, of the idea of the Occident.

This is the enormous, the momentous, the burning significance of Jan Nowak's war memoir, which culminates in the Warsaw Rising of 1944, when the Communist armies stopped their advance on the banks of the Vistula to watch the Polish Home Army, of which Jan Nowak was a lieutenant and a courier (to London), rise in its passion and go down under the German tanks after two months of betrayal and glory. This must be why this book, first published in a Polish-language edition in London in 1978 and smuggled into Poland, became an instant best-seller when subsequently reissued by the underground NOWA press in 1979. Indeed, it became a handbook for Solidarity. This is not just history—one of the favored literary forms of Poles—but actuality as well: this is the story, which continues, of underground resistance, against foreigners and totalitarianism, for liberty and independence. It explains how the Home Army was organized and, especially (since this is where Nowak's involvement was most direct), how propaganda was conducted against the Germans and liaison established

with London, seat of the exiled legitimate government of Poland and, of course, of the British ally.

Inspiring as the story (which reads like an international thriller) is, today's readers in Warsaw and Gdansk must also find in it some sobering lessons. "Black" propaganda had only a marginal effect on German morale. As for the British ally, when the chips were down, first over the Katyn affair (the murder by the Soviets of ten thousand officers, the cream of Poland), then over the question of the composition of the post-war government ("Yalta!"), the British, that is to say Churchill and Eden and their advisers, did harm to Nowak and his chiefs.

Could it have been otherwise? Churchill had to defeat Hitler. And at "Yalta" (that symbol), what could Churchill do, without Roosevelt? In any event, Yalta, on paper at least, was neither a betrayal nor a division of Europe. It represented the objective correlation of forces. Our perception of that correlation is, unfortunately but surely, part of the correlation.

Shrewd Soviets! Naive Americans! Poor Poles! From a position of isolation, we could not possibly be less lucid than we are now. □

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE: HISTORICAL FACT AND CURRENT FICTION

Robert L. Cord / Lambeth Press / \$17.50

Terry Eastland

Thirty-five years ago in *Everson v. Board of Education* the Supreme Court held that state financing of school bus fares of parochial school students did not violate the Constitution. The court justified its decision on grounds that the state, in this case New Jersey, was merely trying to make sure that children got to school safely. Nonetheless, the question of an establishment of religion had been raised, and the court could not resist advancing, for the first time in its history, a comprehensive interpretation of the minimal prohibitions of the First Amendment's establishment clause.

Among the prohibitions listed by the court were such obvious and uncontroversial ones as that government may not set up a state church or

Terry Eastland is editor of the *Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk, Virginia*.

prefer one religion to another. But the court moved beyond these to say as well that government may not prefer religion to nonreligion—that it must be, in effect, neutral between them. Writing for the court, Justice Hugo Black said that "no tax in any amount large or small can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion."

Everson was important, less for its verdict than its rationale, which laid the basis for future court decisions. In 1948, the court said that public school students may not be released from their classes to receive in-school religious instruction taught by ministers, rabbis, and priests. Later, in perhaps its most well-known establishment-clause decisions, the court struck down state-sponsored school prayers and Bible readings. It