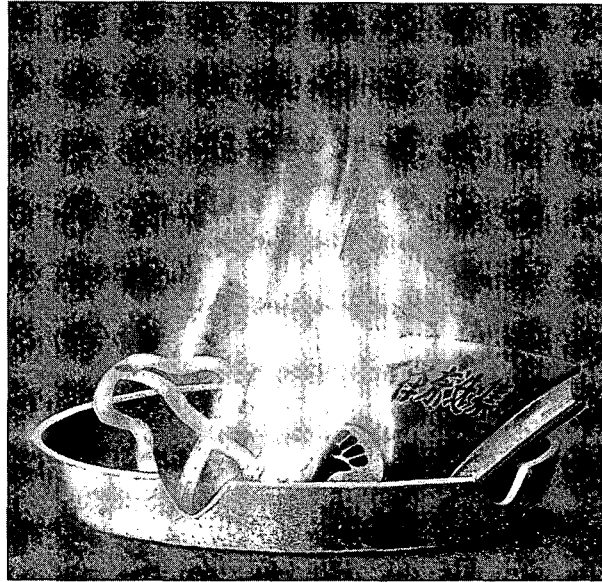


“Enemies of Society”

by Arthur M. Eckstein

“The essential matter of history is not what happened but what people thought or said about it.”

—Frederic Maitland



Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties
by Peter Collier and David Horowitz
New York: Summit Books;
338 pp., \$19.95

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In the late summer of 1985, the San Francisco Bay area celebrated the 40th anniversary of VJ Day and the end of World War II. Part of the celebration consisted of a cavalcade of American Navy vessels around the Bay; this commemorative cavalcade, however, was shadowed by a squadron of small pleasure boats defiantly flying the Japanese flag. These boats were the forces of “The Berkeley Peace Fleet”—*protesting* the celebration. A story hard to believe, perhaps, but true (I witnessed it myself): to the American Hard Left, it seems that any enemy of American society will do—even Japanese fascism.

“Any enemy of American society will do”: this is the brutal point ham-

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mered home again and again in the collection of essays that make up the disturbing new book by Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties*. Long-time editors of the radical magazine *Ramparts*, Collier and Horowitz are also (for instance) the men who introduced Jane Fonda to American far-left politics. Again, when Jean Genet held his momentous “summit meeting” with the Black Panthers (at the home, of course, of a Stanford professor), it was natural that Collier and Horowitz would be there. In other words, when they write about the Movement, they write from the inside.

Basically, they make two grim points. First, within the context of American society at home, they argue that the New Left has historically defended and then identified with violent criminality. Criminals were originally thought of as social victims rather than social predators, then seen as valiant Miltonian rebels, and finally viewed as the militant, military vanguard of the Revolution. Parallel with this sequence of intellectual degradation, the New

Left itself—which of course was overwhelmingly white and bourgeois in origin—went from peaceful protest to violent protest to outright terrorism.

Second, within the context of America’s relationships with the world, the New Left has historically slid from sympathy for the alleged “victims” of the United States into outright identification with the proclaimed international enemies of the United States. The paradigm here was provided by the emotional tie between American Marxism and the Soviet Union during the 1930’s; but that relationship was soon being spookily recapitulated in the relationship between the New Left and Vietnam, Cuba, and Maoist China in the 60’s, and Nicaragua in the 70’s and 80’s. What has been especially disheartening since about 1975 has been the reemergence of the old-line Communist Party of the USA as an intellectual and political force within the movement. Hence the many recent leftist historical studies in which the Stalinist party hacks of the 30’s are portrayed as heroic American dissidents; hence the sinister role played by the World Peace Council (an old

Soviet-front group) in the nuclear freeze; hence the fact that when Collier and Horowitz last appeared at the University of Colorado, the picketing against them was led by the ancient Sender Garlin, current guru of the Colorado left—and the man who recruited Whittaker Chambers for the party back in 1925.

Indeed, in the end Collier and Horowitz argue that if there ever was such a thing as a New Left—the openly anti-Stalinist left of “participatory democracy” and “Mississippi Freedom Summer” (1964)—its span of life was extremely brief, and it has long since disappeared. What has replaced it—and had already replaced it by, say, 1966—was simply the old Hard Left, totalitarian in sentiment, and dedicated to the destruction of American power and influence.

The first essay in the book (and the best) is the heartrending story of the radical lawyer Fay Stender. Brilliant, forceful, a concert-level pianist as well as formidable legal mind, Stender was moved by sincere compassion for the underprivileged, and became more and more drawn to the issue of “convicts’ rights”—a movement that her energy helped make national in scale. Eventually she became the head of a radical law firm closely associated with the Black Panther Party. She ended up defending the thug George Jackson, a Panther “Field Marshal” accused of murdering a prison guard. Jackson was portrayed in his “autobiography” (which Stender cleverly edited) as a saintly revolutionary, the type of person who would create the new America for which Stender herself longed; the book, *Soledad Brother*, became a best-seller, and George Jackson became famous.

But by the summer of 1971 Stender had also become convinced that in reality Jackson was a very violent and uncontrolled personality—too dangerous to deal with. She withdrew from his legal case when it became clear to her that Jackson was going to attempt an armed break-out from San Quentin (six people died in the resulting bloodbath); eventually she withdrew, disillusioned, from convict law altogether. She became instead an innovative advocate of women’s rights (and has a fair claim to be seen as the originator of the concept of “palimo-

ny”). But in 1979 Stender’s past connection to “The Revolution” came back to destroy her: a brutal hanger-on of George Jackson’s invaded her Berkeley home and shot her five times at point-blank range, leaving her paralyzed from the neck down and in constant pain. Her last appearance in a court of law was to testify for the prosecution. And then the horrific pain she was under (mostly physical, but also psychological)—“I structured my entire existence around trying to do something about racism; and now this”) led her to commit suicide.

If the story of Fay Stender has all the elements of tragedy, the essay on the decline and fall of SDS and the Weather Underground has all the elements of black comedy. Here you have an organization that in the autumn of 1968 had close to 100,000 members and stood on the threshold of real national power; within two years that organization had been reduced to just 600 people—but at least they were all “pure revolutionaries”! The cause of this fiasco lay in the psychotic revolutionary fantasies of the SDS leadership, who persisted in thinking they were in the position of the Bolsheviks in 1917. What a crew they were: Bernadine Dohrn (the Red Queen of the Revolution, famous for her technique of “horizontal recruitment”); John Jacobs, the ever-ingenious, hyperenergetic propagandist, living on drugs; the tiny, sinister bomber Terry Robbins; the confused and increasingly wary Mark Rudd. Nor should one forget Tom Hayden, “the American Lenin”: by 1970 reduced to military leader of “The Berkeley Red Family,” convinced that he could ignite the Revolution by getting the Black Panthers to shoot down an Alameda County sheriff’s helicopter (“Just like you, Tom, to get someone else to pull the trigger”). Some sort of nadir here was reached in Dohrn’s famous speech to the SDS leadership in which she proclaimed the crazed mass murderer Charles Manson as a revolutionary hero.

But amid all these savage hallucinations, a new mood was established in which some real treason could be committed: meetings with the North Vietnamese, in Havana and Prague, to coordinate anti-American propaganda and “military” actions around the

world. (Collier and Horowitz show how they themselves partook in the new, overtly anti-American culture, printing in *Ramparts* secret information that they knew would compromise the US defense posture in regard to the Soviet Union; all that happened to them was that they became celebrities.) And some people were really killed, too. The most spectacular case: three soldiers of “The Weather Army,” who blew themselves to bits while constructing an antipersonnel bomb—a bomb, by the way, whose intended victims were ordinary enlisted men and their dates at a dance in Ft. Dix, New Jersey. The left is furious with Collier and Horowitz for revealing (for the first time) the hideous nature of the explosive device here, and its working-class targets: it made the Weather bombers look so bad. The latter’s “martyrdom,” however, is still ceremonially commemorated every year.

Another outstanding article is Horowitz’s “Letter to a Political Friend.” This is a meditation on the philosophy of socialism, called forth by the death of Horowitz’s father (an old-line Communist), and the failure of one of Horowitz’s childhood friends to attend the funeral on the grounds that he now viewed Horowitz as someone who had “betrayed the Revolution.” Horowitz’s father had devoted his life to the cause of “socialism,” and in the early 50’s had allowed himself to be cruelly used by the party in an “America is Anti-Semitic” campaign—an experience from which he never fully recovered; Horowitz now sees in the behavior of his childhood friend the same lack of human feeling, the same lack of ordinary “bourgeois” decency, that had characterized the Old Left, and from which the “New” Left had originally sought to distance itself. That effort was ultimately in vain, however, because the Hard Left is always just the Hard Left: always subject to the tyranny of the Idea, as opposed to the ordinary truths of everyday human life.

What else but emotional shallowness, for instance, can explain the break-up of decades-long marriages as a result of the 1956 Khrushchev speech against Stalin? What else but emotional shallowness, a horrid loneliness, can explain lives that find their centers not in true personal relationships but in violent sectarian politics of

any sort? "Not compassion but resentment . . . not the longing for justice but the desire for revenge; not a quest for peace but a call to arms . . . not altruism and love but nihilism and hate. This is the poisoned well of the radical heart; it is war that feeds the true radical passions."

Powerful stuff; perhaps a little too powerful. Sometimes, when Collier and Horowitz make generalized statements like this, it is not quite clear who their exact targets are. I have tended to use the term "Hard Left" throughout this essay, because that's what I *think* Collier and Horowitz mean. But this is my formulation, not theirs; they are all too often satisfied with the simple term "the left." Yet "the left" in reality is a pretty big place, and Collier and Horowitz never address the possibility of whether there could ever be such a thing as a "responsible" American left—or rather, to put it bluntly, a patriotic American left. Perhaps the answer here is "No," because the moderate left has

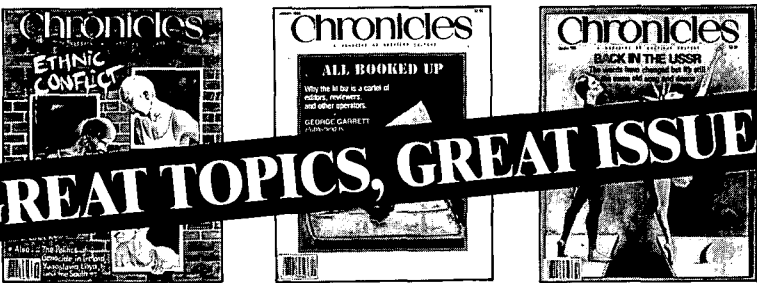
a very strong tendency to be pulled into anti-American postures by the hard-liners. But I don't think that people like Irving Howe and Michael Harrington, however much one might disagree with their ideas, deserve to be lumped with Bernadine Dohrn or Kathy Boudin as potential totalitarians. In other words, the actual targets of Collier and Horowitz turn out upon inspection to be a much narrower group than the general term "the left" might imply.

Similarly, despite its dramatic title—and despite the generalizations in the last, polemical essay—*Destructive Generation* does not have as its true subject the 60's generation as a whole. The book is really about a very small group of people: around a dozen, all told. And not every one of them is ultimately destructive: not Fay Stender, not the Vietnam veteran (now a policeman) who is the hero of another major piece, not Collier and Horowitz themselves. I think it is true that the

60's generation should be viewed with great suspicion. But this could and should have been demonstrated with more examples: for instance, the nasty things the old 60's radicals are doing to our universities, where so many of them have managed to take refuge. (The fact that Bill Ayers, a central figure in Weatherman terrorism, current husband of Bernadine Dohrn, and a man who is still living in confident expectation of the Revolution, is also today a professor of education: well, this boggles the mind, but it is not something one can find out from Collier and Horowitz.) Similarly, many old unreconstructed radicals can be found now on the staffs of prominent Democratic congressmen: what a wonderful essay Collier and Horowitz could have written on these people. But as the book stands, it is subject to the accusation that the authors have picked on—and exaggerated the importance of—a few particularly vulnerable targets.

But Collier and Horowitz are correct to point out that in the 60's generation there are a fair number of people who have had second thoughts about their old radicalism. These people know that the radical future is an illusion and that the American present is worth defending. So it is very likely, as Collier and Horowitz indicate, that the great political battles of the next decade will be fought out between those who have had second thoughts about their experiences in the 60's, and those who have not. And for those of us who have to gird ourselves for these upcoming battles, *Destructive Generation* is a very important book to read.

A final, personal note. This is a book very much about Berkeley, which is one reason it moved me deeply—sometimes to anger, more often to sadness. For I have to confess that every summer I go back there, to that spooky, living museum of 60's attitudes—and have a wonderful time. And it's not just the amazing, clear light of the place, nor the use of the great libraries of the university. Berkeley is also the place where I peer back—and with some sentimentality—at my sort-of-radical youth, to a time when everything seemed humanly possible. It's those "US Out of North America" bumper-stickers, though, that occasionally make me cough.



Stopping for Death—April 1989—Philosopher John Gray on the religiosity of the peace movement, and how it is not a new paganism, but a decadent form of Christianity; Thomas Fleming on the moral bankruptcy of civil disobedience in the right-to-life movement; Bryce Christensen on how death education in the schools avoids the real issues of life and death; and poet Frederick Turner on the use and misuse of loaded language.

American Fiction—May 1989—A celebration of American fiction writing that includes a lengthy excerpt from George Garrett's new novel *Entered From the Sun*, about the life and death of Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe. Plus novelist Walker Percy on the writer as diagnostician, and a short story by Fred Chappell.

Revolution: The Legacy of 1789 in France, England and America—June 1989—Revolutions around the world: Geoffrey Wagner on Grenada and the Caribbean, Leo Raditsa on South Africa, Don Feder on Israel's religious revolution, and Michael Warder on *glasnost* and the USSR. Plus George Watson on the English and French Revolutions, an update from Paul Hollander on political pilgrims, and Jack Neusner reviews *Profscam*.

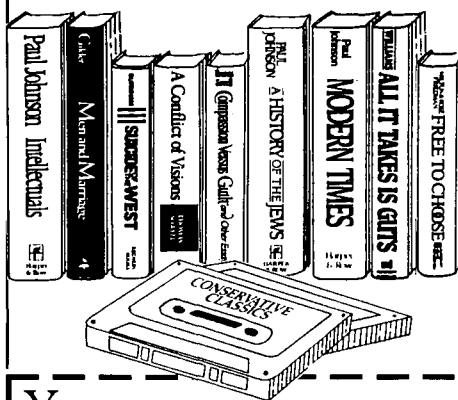
The Burden of Liberalism—July 1989—1988 Ingersoll Prize winner, sociologist Edward Shils, on the varieties of liberalism; historian George Watson on postwar Buchenwald: for the Soviets it was also a death camp. Timothy Ashby reviews Hernando de Soto's plea for unfettered capitalism in South America, *The Other Path*.

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517 pp., \$19.95

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New York: Harper & Row;

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New York: Alfred A. Knopf;

348 pp., \$18.95

◆
“Nigger” is the word upon which Bill Kauffman balances and dances his first novel, *Every Man a King*. It is, to say the very least, a difficult word. It is a word denied to white lips in polite society, and is now heard only coming with any frequency from trash-mouthed blacks.

The saying of the forbidden word on a television show by Kauffman’s central character requires his banishment from Washington and precludes any political future. How easy it is to become a nonperson in the United States.

Every Man a King is satire. In the first third or so of the book the victims belong to the new Conservative Coalition. The hero (like Kauffman) is a populist agrarian conservative with little patience for New York parochials. I do not know what someone who does not share this viewpoint would make of it:

In vain might the curious visitor [to the think tank where the central character works] search for evidence of the Mugwump conservatism of Henry Adams, the gallant localist conservatism of Jefferson Davis, the rum-bustious anarchist conserva-

tism of John Dos Passos, or any of a thousand brilliant and singular mutations. The American Foundation, its patrons and clients (including the scurrying ants of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue) in lockstep, held to a peculiar and astringent doctrine admixing unstinting loyalty to big business with a perfervid enthusiasm for all things military. The resulting alloy they called “conservatism,” and on its behalf they sacrificed forests of paper and covens of smiling senior fellows, all to quench the unquenchable appetite of the Goddess Media.

Having uttered the unmentionable, John Huey returns to his hometown, Batavia, in Upstate New York. He takes up with a woman from the lower orders and we are given to understand that such people are noble in some way. He calls up the memory of his grandfather, who was a member of Huey Long’s Share the Wealth Club (and thus the title of the book). My main problem with the book is I think that populist utopianism can be as offensive as leftist or rightist utopianism, and there are limits to revisionist ideas, in spite of the certain pleasure I had watching Kauffman get a dig in once in a while against Roosevelt and gang.

A conservative reader might nod his or her head, glad that the book is around but knowing in the heart of hearts it will not matter much. And while I’ll nod my head and murmur approval at the slings and arrows Kauffman slugs at the big city and the blurb manufacturers, go ahead and quote me as writing: *Every Man a King* is a funny, delicious political dash against the well-known suspects.

The Twenty-seventh City, on the other hand, is more a long proposal for a film than an actual novel. Its editor has asserted in an interview that he actually did read it, but he never gets around to saying exactly what made it, in his words, “an impressive and challenging book.” I am sure they can wheel in the dying horse: a literary novel that makes use of the thriller

package, this time set in St. Louis and involving the appointment of a woman from India as the police chief. Of course there is sex and some sort of conspiracy. The engine of plot chugs on for pages. If you have read Ludlum, Michener, or any of the other worthies from the best-seller list then you have already read *The Twenty-seventh City*. The function of this novel is to pass time. Never have so many been in need of this sort of drug, to pass a mental kidney stone. Why don’t they just watch television?

The *Emperor of the Air* has been garlanded with praise. We all know that the author is studying in Boston to be a doctor. One hopes that he will be a better doctor than his stories predict. I would not seek him out to treat any ailment. He would commit surgery to cure a mosquito bite.

If there is something still called magazine verse, the *Emperor of the Air* would pass as the equivalent of magazine fiction. Pretension and pretentious are the brackets. You pay your money and you better get inspired. The characters in these stories are always sensitive; their problems are always significant. They always *mean* something, but their depth goes no deeper than a greeting card. The characters are so illusive, so uplifting that to this reader they are like eating too much baklava: headache, teeth coated, and why did I do this again, when I do know better. Some evidence:

When I thought of this and the woman I was sad. It seemed you could never really know another person. I felt alone in the world, in the way that makes me aware of sound and temperature, as if I had just left a movie theatre and stepped into an alley where a light rain was falling, and the wind was cool, and, from somewhere, other people’s voices could be heard.

“Don’t just watch,” he said. “See.” I looked. The ice plant was watery-looking and fat and at the edges of my vision I