BOOK REVIEWS

Out of Step, by Sidney Hook. Harper and Row 1987, 640 pp.

David Evanier

Quite apart from the political perspicacity evident on every page, it is the quality of mind, relentless vigor, logic, clarity, and devotion to reason that informs *Out of Step*. This political memoir is a masterpiece.

Here is our century: from the sweet early days of 1916 in Jewish Williamsburg when equality of opportunity spelled hope:

> Amidst the noise and the filth, there was a sense of privacy and self-respect and the hush and color of the Sabbath tradition. Above all there was a feeling of hope. Their hope was sustained by a faith that the doors of opportunity would be opened by education. No generation of parents had ever been prepared to sacrifice so much for the education of their children ... There was also hope in America, nurtured, despite the incidents of religious hostility and discrimination outside the enclave walls, by the public school.

to the 1960s and early 1970s when the New Left ran riot on campuses and there was

> the collapse of the conventions of rational discourse ... some students, teachers and administrators had been manhandled—in one or two places murdered—buildings torched, libraries vandalized, faculty offices ransacked, administrative centers and structures occupied for long periods, and valuable records destroyed.

Hook recalls events that were "perhaps the most shocking series of experiences in my life." He writes of a faculty meeting at the Washington Square campus of New York University when students demanded they be permitted to attend. A committee of three was allowed to enter:

> Whereupon in marched three students, one black and two whites, one of them guzzling a can of beer. The black student, who was wearing a hat, was the first to speak when they reached the platform. Turning to the teachers, he said, pointing to his hat, "My mudder told me that wearing a hat indoors is a mark of disrespect for the people present." And then an unbelievable thing happened. Two thirds of the faculty present rose to their feet in a standing ovation and vigorously applauded the students ... The two white students delivered tirades against the government, the university, the faculty, the war, and capitalism.

Placards were distributed with the headline, "Stamp Out Lice—Shut Down the Courts." The striking students "captured and liberated" the Loeb Student Center and took possession of a computer. They demanded a ransom of $100,000 to be used as bail money for imprisoned Black Panthers in return for the release of the computer. New York University president Hester and the Senate committee actually offered to raise $10,000 to $15,000 for the bail fund. Not appeased, the students laid a fuse to a bomb device outside the computer center. Only the intervention of school officials who rushed the building through a window prevented a disaster.

This was not the low point of Hook's academic memories of the glorious 60s. In New Zealand, a student fired a shot at him and ran down the aisle, gun in hand. Hook grabbed a microphone and said: "Even if that had been a real bullet and not a blank, it would not have been an answer to my arguments."

Out of Step encompasses the key events and issues of the century with a superb grasp of what is most relevant. It has a vivid immediacy.

In his concluding chapter, "Reaffirmations," Hook writes:

> When I was young, the hallmark of a radical was willingness to listen to anyone who held a heretical view, a willingness to hear out one's opponent, and a pride in the uses of argument and evidence to further or refute a position. Today, those who call themselves radical, and sometimes

> liberal, will often refuse to permit their critics to speak freely . . .

This moral indignation, the almost total recall, the selective use of precise details, and arguments distilled to their essence, mark *Out of Step*. But in truth, sometimes Hook's seems like a voice from another planet. For this is a largely unknown history, except to those who lived through it without blinders on. (Hook remembers well the Bertrand Russell who in 1953 preferred a world war to a "universal communist empire." Later, Russell lurched to the other extreem—which Hook attributes partly to a streak of exhibitionism—and turned into an admirer of Ho Chi Minh, a rabid hater of the United States, and, returning to the pattern of his youth, a fierce pacifist.) The question is, can younger generations, despite distance, ignorance, and political animosity, somehow identify with the youthful liveliness of mind that makes these pages resonate? Anti-communists have been defamed and appear to have been routed. But as Hook points out, the term "witch hunt"—which communists, leftists, and even liberals use at every occasion (interchangeably with "McCarthyism") to trounce any criticism of communists or communism—implies that since witches don't exist, neither does the enemy. Yet communism remains democracy's most determined foe. It continues to kill hideously when impeded by the vulnerable—Afghanistan and the boat people are only recent examples—and it continues to mask its intentions when it is expedient to do so (as in Cuba and now Nicaragua) and hide its mistakes as long as it is possible to do so (Chernobyl). It remains the evil empire (Hook praises President Reagan for saying so). Because Hook is so right on the issues, one continues to hope against hope that a book such as this, which should be assigned in every history and political science class, will somehow take hold.

Here is the birth of a young Marxist in a period of post-war hysteria against "radicals": "In the post World War I period, outspoken radical opposition invited not just a loss of a government job or public insults, as in the McCarthy era, but mob assaults, usually sparked by men in military uniform." He studied at City College from 1919 to 1923, and was inspired by a great teacher, Morris Raphael Cohen. He began teaching in the elementary school system in New York City in 1923 and was a graduate student at Columbia from 1923 through 1927. It was at Columbia that he met John Dewey, who had the profoundest influence on Hook's development. This description of Dewey fits Sidney Hook: "Although he repudiated philosophy in the grand manner, he restored the conception of philosophy as a quest for wisdom."

Hook's first encounter with Americans doing espionage work for the Soviet Union came in 1926 (later, Earl Browder would attempt to persuade him to set up a spy apparatus himself). This encounter evokes this characteristic reflection:

> At that time and for decades later, progressives and liberals took it for granted that it was natural for the Soviet Union to have an intelligence service to further its interests or rather the interests of the Party leadership. There was never any recognition of the need of the United States to have an intelligence service. When some of its more bizarre and foolish actions, many years later, came to light, the popular agitation was not to improve it but to abolish it.

The above sentences come at the conclusion of a chapter about a couple involved in espionage. As interesting as the chapter is, the most gripping part is the section I have quoted. Hook is perhaps most brilliant in organizing and molding from over sixty years of active political engagement the distillation of all he has thought into deceptively simple paragraphs that in their pared-down, terse common sense, logic, and historical perspective, sometimes have the

originality and effect of epigrams. One does not always feel that in the areas of literary sensibility or personal character portrayal (as in his analysis of the *Partisan Review* milieu) that Hook has the last word. But as a political and historical analyst, he is riveting.

He cites the telling phrase or quote. Here is Malcolm Cowley's review of a book by an early victim of Soviet terror:

> But there are many truths about Russia, and he tells only one . . . the truth he gives us is of a special sort: It is the truth about spraying apple orchards as written from the point of view of the wooly aphis and the codling moth.

Hook comments: "This brutal comparison of the innocent victims of Soviet terror with harmful parasites goes beyond anything that Lenin wrote. Lenin was the first to refer to those who did not support the Communist regime as 'vermin,' but he, as did even Stalin and Vyshinsky, professed to believe that the victims of their terror were guilty of something, however far-fetched. They would never have admitted to the slaughter of the innocent, but their apologists admitted it and justified it."

Hook's gallery of portraits includes Max Eastman, V.F. Calverton, Whittaker Chambers, Norman Thomas, Franz Boas, Arthur Koestler, Corliss Lamont, Alfred Kazin, and Irving Howe. He skillfully rewrites Kazin's revisions of his own political past. Noting that Kazin now claims to have been an anti-Stalinist in the 1930's, Hook writes that when Kazin was on the staff of the *New Republic*, he never differed with Malcolm Cowley, "who at that time was the very model of a faithful communist fellow-traveler," nor did Kazin ever express opposition to the Moscow trials or the Stalin-Hitler pact. Hook recalls meeting Kazin at the home of V.F. Claverton:

> He [Kazin] interrupted my account of the Stalinist penetration of the cultural life of the time with the assurance that I "won't get anywhere fighting them," that "they are too strong to be resisted," and "it doesn't pay" to struggle with them . . . commented to Calverton after he left that he seemed to me to be a starry-eyed opportunist.

Hook's lengthy portraits of Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein are always fair and judicious, filled with memorable and character-revealing quotations. His study of Einstein is particularly artful. Here is the most towering of scientific minds who, on the personal level, feels a total vulnerability because of his experience as a Jew in the twentieth century. Constantly exasperated by Einstein's unwillingness to condemn the Russians and the various communist fronts that used his name, Hook ultimately realizes that Einstein's vacillations were due to the feeling that, however brutal the Russians were, Einstein the German Jewish refugee feared the Germans more.

Out of Step rises on wave upon wave of significant historical experience that confirms a set of steadfast democratic principles. The historical experience includes Hook's break with the Communist Party; anti-Semitism in the academy ("We had no desire to push our way in socially; it was really love of our subject matter and the hope of living with it in a wholeharted dedicated way that moved us."); the Moscow trials; the formation of the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky; the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939; the Committee for Cultural Freedom (to counteract communist intellectual "peace" circuses); the cultural influence of the Communist Party, and its twisting and turning political lines and semantic corruption; the rise of the Iron Curtain; and the onset of the Cold War. Hook on each occasion went forth into the battle, and he was frequently alone at the beginning. He is pitiless toward the "revolutionary intellectuals" who "always spoke for the interests of the revolutionary working class, even in the absence of sub-

stantial numbers of workers in their ranks," and who refused to support the United States against Hitler since, they reasoned, "No matter which side triumphs, the yoke of capitalism will still be on the neck of the workers." Therefore, by their reasoning, "Roosevelt is the greater and more immediate enemy of the American working class than is Hitler, as abominable as he may be." Hook comments: "I have never changed my mind about the wisdom of the policy of the lesser evil. It seems to me to be at the center of any humane conception of political life."

This is the intellectual's sense of responsibility to his country and his people, anchored in the real world, and without the heady delights of radical self-indulgence and romanticism. From the intellectuals who rejected fighting Hitler to the "Better Red than Dead" appeasers of the 1950s to contemporary anti-anti-Communists, Hook has words that are, to my mind, unanswerable:

> If those who died in the struggle against fascism could have foreseen that the survivors were going to capitulate to a despotism every whit as brutal, in order to enjoy whatever life their tyrants permitted them in exchange for their freedom and human dignity, why should they have fought? . . . If . . . fear of a nuclear holocaust justified capitulation to aggression, those who died resisting Hitler, Mussolini, Hirohito, Franco, and other tyrants could very well have asked: "Why were *we* expected to die fighting evils *you* find perfectly tolerable to live under?"

Hook's deep anger and contempt are reserved for the irresponsibility of fellow intellectuals who have arrived at a variety of contrived reasons for supporting a capitulation to communism. Today we see them in many different guises. There are the historians who have rewritten the Cold War to place the blame on the West. They go on to maintain that anti-communism is too one-sided, that there is evil on both sides. (This argument harks back to the pacifist position that led some intellectuals to refuse to oppose Hitler because "there is evil in all our hearts.") Then there are other arguments used separately, interchangeably, or in contradiction to each other: i.e., anti-communism isn't sexy, modern, or youthful; nuclear war makes opposition to communism impossible; the communists are too concerned about the economic distress of their own people to be occupied with warfare; Gorbachev is hip and yuppified, unlike the simplistic, old-hat Reagan; the Vietnam War proved the folly of anti-communism; communism is evolving toward democracy; the tyranny of communism is none of our business. We should concern ourselves only with countries we can influence, such as South Africa, Chile, and El Salvador. And finally: right-wing regimes are really the only ones worth opposing anyway.

But of course Hook's deepest fury is for the communist intellectuals and fellow travelers. The most unforgettable scene in *Out of Step* is his portrait of Brecht in 1935, and above all the moment at which Brecht responds to Hook's objection to Stalin's purge of the communist opposition. Brecht said: "As for them, the more innocent they are, the more they deserve to be shot." Hook could not believe what he had heard. Brecht repeated the phrase and sat in his chair, "holding a drink in his hand. When he saw me with his hat and coat, he looked surprised. He put his glass down, rose, and with a sickly smile took his hat and coat and left. Neither of us said a word. I never saw him again."

The scene is an echo of Malcolm Cowley's comparison of a victim of the Soviet terror to a harmful parasite. It is this intellectual ignominy that is Hook's central subject, and the cruelty (masked as artistic privilege) from which it stems. And one can understand his obsession: it springs from his own conception of the role of the intellectual. That conception is of a kind of sweet reason, at least as it is practiced by

Hook, a human concern combined with a powerful logic, a willingness to sacrifice and to think things through—to enter the fray and suffer being alone—for the sake of mankind. Today Hook is honorary chairman of Social Democrats, U.S.A. He has remained thoroughly consistent.

It all seems very distant from us, and that is to the immense loss of all of us who want to see America survive.

David Evanier is a novelist and critic. He has written for The New York Times Book Review, Commentary, the *Paris Review, The American Spectator, National Review,* and other journals.

No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities, by Ellen Schrecker. Oxford University Press 1986, 464 pp.

Harvey Klehr

American communism remains contested ground. Virtually every one of the many books that have been published in the last decade about the communist movement in this country has generated an inordinate amount of passion, ideological fervor, and angry comment. Few academic topics produce such heat. The emotional and political stakes in the subject are, however, high. Many of those writing about the issue have or had personal connections to the radical movement; for many, writing about American communists means writing about and judging their own or their parents' political choices. Many see their academic investigations as providing important contemporary political lessons and morals.

Ellen Schrecker's account of how American higher education dealt with the communist issue, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, is no exception. Several reviewers have vehemently challenged her judgment that "the academy, an institution ostensibly dedicated to intellectual freedom, collaborated in curtailing that freedom." Others, notably Theodore Draper and Dennis Wrong, have suggested that her portrait of academic communists is far too uncritical.

No Ivory Tower includes a useful and informative discussion of the extent of communist involvement in American higher education and of how colleges and universities responded to it. By bringing together information from a variety of different campuses and government hearings, Schrecker is able to illustrate the nature of academic communism with a thoroughness not heretofore available. She estimates that during the McCarthy period more than 100 academics were either dismissed or threatened with dismissal for political reasons. Virtually all were communists or ex-communists; only a handful of others were harassed. Indeed, Schrecker notes that, hyperbole about a reign of terror to the contrary, her research turned up only one person fired for protesting others' firings.

Schrecker's research also indicated that, despite a variety of hardships, most of those who lost their jobs found ways to survive, thanks to the pluralism of academic life. Some emigrated or taught in Canada, others went to black colleges or got non-tenure track appointments. Scientists often worked for businesses, though they faced problems if their jobs required security clearances. Several became prosperous psychotherapists.

Few academics were still communists when they were called to testify before congressional committees beginning in the late 1940s. Those who freely testified and cooperated with the committees presented no problem to their universities. Administrations and faculties had to decide, however,

how to respond to those who refused to cooperate with Congress. In general, academics who testified about themselves but refused to "name names," often risking a prison term for contempt of Congress, usually kept their jobs. Those who took the Fifth Amendment before the committees but cooperated with their own universities' investigations sometimes were able to keep their jobs, particularly if they had tenure at private schools. Those who refused to cooperate with either the committees or the universities on the grounds that their political beliefs were no one's business were almost always fired.

Schrecker's sympathies are clearly with the latter group. She notes that the demands by faculties and universities for candor on the part of those academics who had taken the Fifth Amendment violated their civil rights and represented an intrusion into "normally sacrosanct areas of political belief."

In her view, nothing the Communist Party did or said justified the assault launched upon it during the McCarthy era or even unusual scrutiny of its members. She refuses to judge communists or communism. Discussing recent studies of the CPUSA, she notes that "the judgemental tone of an earlier era sounds out-of-date" and adds that it is no longer necessary "if it ever was—to condemn or exonerate it."

Although she insists on a policy of strict neutrality about the Communist Party, Schrecker is far more judgemental about higher education ("the academy, an institution ostensibly dedicated to intellectual freedom, collaborated in curtailing that freedom") and about academics ("almost all of these essentially liberal academics faltered," either participating in, condoning, or opposing in a very limited manner this assault on academic freedom). She is more understanding of those ex-communists who did name names of their former comrades because of the pressures they faced.

Although she is quite reliable about what happened, Schrecker's explanations for why it happened are far less satisfactory.

Most of those who later ran afoul of the government had joined the Communist Party in the 1930s under the impact of the Depression and the rise of fascism. Young, bright graduate students and junior faculty, many facing anti-Semitism that limited their opportunities, were attracted by the Party's advocacy of a Popular Front against fascism and, particularly, by its support of Republican Spain.

Schrecker insists that these academic communists scrupulously avoided mixing their political and professional lives. "They were almost unanimous," she claims, "in refusing to use their classrooms for purposes of indoctrination." They "generally tried not to let their political views affect their teaching." They shared the scholarly commitment to "objectivity and fairness." Yet, Schrecker also recognizes that one of the reasons communism appealed to academics "was its claim to offer an ideology." Indeed, more than most communists, the academic breed might be expected to have paid more than passing attention to the ideology. Curiously enough, Schrecker never inquires whether that ideology, Marxism-Leninism, supported such abstract values as objectivity and fairness, or the separation of intellectual and political life.

No doubt many academic communists were bad communists. But it strains credulity to think that most of them held to such liberal views. As Theodore Draper, himself once a member of the Communist Party and an acquaintance of many of Schrecker's subjects, has written of Schrecker's point, "much of this would have surprised and offended the communist professors at the time. If there was anything they did not believe in, it was classless 'objectivity and fairness.'"

Dennis Wrong, writing in *Dissent*, re-

called one former communist teacher who used his classroom as a political platform and may have used grades as a weapon; he mentions another [Stalinist] teacher who "habitually gave low grades to Trotskyists and defended doing so when confronted by them in his office."

The uncritical willingness to endow communists with the most impeccable liberal credentials is also evident when Schrecker discusses the refusal of several academics to cooperate with university panels investigating their defiance of congressional committees. One of them, mathematician Chandler Davis, was, at the time of his hearing at the University of Michigan, no longer officially a Party member, but "had never really broken with the Party." Davis claimed that his refusal to cooperate was motivated by his deep commitment to political liberty. Schrecker admires his "almost obsessive ... devotion to civil liberties." Regardless of whether Davis ought to have been fired and sent to prison for contempt of Congress, it seems odd that so forthright a defender of civil liberties saw no incongruity in loyalty to a political party that, on principle, denigrated the concept of civil liberties and, in practice, opposed civil liberties for fascists and Trotskyists.

Sidney Hook and Arthur Lovejoy were only two of the distinguished liberals and civil libertarians who offered rationales for firing communist teachers. Among the justifications offered were the Party's conspiratorial nature, the academic's obligation of candor and integrity, and loss of intellectual independence. Hook, who opposed allowing anyone outside the university to judge the fitness of its faculty, nonetheless insisted that the adverse affect of the Communist Party on the freedom to teach or to learn ought to be grounds for dismissal. One might quarrel with Hook's demand that the faculty member bear the burden of proof in demonstrating that he had not surrendered his intellectual independence and still recognize that his position reflected a deep concern for academic freedom and the obligation it imposed on faculty members for honesty and candor.

Schrecker finds all the justifications fundamentally flawed. Sometimes she caricatures the views of Party enemies; "because there was no academic freedom in Russia, American communists had no right to enjoy it here," she notes, after quoting Lovejoy's argument that those who belonged to an organization committed to the extirpation of academic freedom should not be allowed to benefit from it. One does not have to agree with Lovejoy's view to recognize that there is a dilemma for a democratic and free society in dealing with those of its members who belong to an organization that rejects its very tenets.

Sometimes Schrecker ridicules the belief that joining the Communist Party meant the surrender of intellectual freedom, defending the intellectual independence and openness of her subjects. Many, she claims, were in the Communist Party because of their views; they did not hold their views because they were in the Communist Party. This argument would be more persuasive if so many of these academic communists had not changed their views about such matters as collective security, fascism, cooperation with the New Deal, etc., at the same time that the Communist Party did.

Nathan Glazer has noted that "in retrospect ... it would have been better if the few communists and the larger number of ex-communists on college and university faculties had been left alone." He is probably correct, with the one exception noted below.

Only on the issue of secrecy does Schrecker suggest that communist teachers were at all vulnerable. The issue was one of the major points used against Party mem-

bers by critics. Few academics were ever open Party members. Most used pseudonyms within the Party while they belonged. Schrecker admits that the policy of concealment was self-defeating, but excuses it by noting that in the political climate of the late 1940s or 1950s, an open communist would have quickly been fired. She believes that keeping membership secret was less a matter of intent to deceive than simply an effort to keep one's job. (She also claims that academics never realized that joining the Party in the 1930s would be the momentous decision it later became in the McCarthy period. Yet, if they so readily accommodated themselves to secrecy and stealth about their political views, they might well have understood what was at stake.)

Whatever the motive, the desire to avoid public identification as a communist led some teachers to commit perjury. The first large-cale investigations of teachers were the Rapp-Coudert hearings in New York in 1940. A state law provided that any teacher taking the Fifth Amendment could be fired. In the middle of the hearings the Board of Higher Education announced it would fire communists and fascists. Faced with this admittedly awful choice between telling the truth and losing their jobs or refusing to answer questions and losing their jobs, all the communist teachers subpoenaed lied under oath.

Schrecker notes that "this seems to have been a collective decision made by the leaders of each [Party] academic unit." Morris Schappes, an instructor at CCNY and a prominent communist, admitted his membership, but falsely testified that he was the only Party member in the CCNY unit. When the Committee produced ex-communists to testify to the names of their former comrades, twenty people were fired and eleven more resigned. More distressing to Schrecker than the lying was the willingness of academics to allow the Party leaders to make decisions that affected their futures. No independence here! She admits that Schappes's "lack of candor"—he committed perjury—helped to destroy liberal support for the teachers and convinced people that there really was a conspiracy afoot. It also made suspect, with good cause, other protestations by communist teachers about their integrity and truthfulness.

In an era in which the academy has become far more politicized than ever before, the account of how academics confronted the issue of communist colleagues has obvious relevance. The issues that Schrecker raises about academic freedom and academic responsibility, the propriety of the university's inquiring into the political beliefs of its faculty, and the use of the Fifth Amendment remain important, even if her answers are not always convincing. We may deplore the behavior of congressional committees, but we ought also to recognize that universities did have a legitimate interest in the behavior of those of their members who had defied Congress or refused to answer questions about their activities in an organization whose ideology and structure were anti-democratic. It may be both prudent and essential that opponents of democracy be protected by academic freedom, but it is not required that we cast them as moral exemplars.

Harvey Klehr is Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Politics at Emory University.